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HUMANITY OF JESUS



FATHER MORITZ MESCHLER
S.J.

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Dr. William M. Jones



THE HUMANITY OF JESUS.

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THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

BY

FATHER MORITZ MESCHLER, S.J.

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION



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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE prudent householder stores up in his treasury things old and new. The new is always welcome, and the old may always be of further use.

What the author here offers his readers is nothing new, but old articles that have from time to time appeared in "Stimmen aus Maria-Laach." Some kind readers having expressed a wish to have these essays collected and reprinted in convenient form. A few of them are published in the present volume, which will be followed by others. Winter crops, it is said, improve with keeping, but unhappily the articles here reproduced can hardly be said to have improved, and kindly forbearance on the part of the reader is as much needed now, as it was when they first appeared.

THE AUTHOR.

LUXEMBURG, *February 20th*, 1908.

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I.

OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR'S ASCETICISM.

ONE of the standing grievances against the Catholic Church is her asceticism. The mere name arouses in countless minds not only pity and scorn, but indignation, horror and repugnance, and a whole host of angry and painful feelings against this "melancholy perversion of the Christian spirit," this "doctrine of inhuman mortification and self-torture," this "system of degrading and suppressing our divinely gifted nature."

That pagans both ancient and modern think and speak thus, need cause no surprise, but that those who believe in Christianity and the Gospel use similar language can be due only to misconception or ignorance. For the only asceticism practised in the Catholic Church is that of the Gospel, and the asceticism of the Gospel is that of Christ. Whoever believes in Christ, must believe also in His asceticism.

It was impossible for our Divine Saviour to pass over without notice so important a point in the religious life as asceticism. In His Gospel is shown forth a complete system of it, and in these pages we shall endeavour to give a brief outline of that system and a sketch of its practice by the Christian Church.

Nothing tends more to conciliate those who love truth, and nothing is more in the interests of truth itself than to reveal truth. This discussion is peculiarly adapted also to throw light on our Saviour's personality, on His lofty spirit and His noble character.

We shall not attempt more than to give a clear idea of asceticism, to show how it is practised, and to draw some fruitful conclusions from what we shall have said.

I.

There is scarcely a word which calls up more confused and mistaken ideas than does the word "asceticism." It is therefore important and even essential to begin by understanding clearly and accurately what it means.

The Greek word "askesis" means simply "practice," and so by asceticism we mean the practice of a religious, spiritual life. Life consists in action motivated by some indwelling force—in practice, exertion and struggle. Every exertion is made to attain some object: and, as we are speaking here of the spiritual life, and this life has as its object Christian perfection, asceticism is, in its full and proper signification, a striving after Christian perfection.¹

Perfection may be defined as the possession of all suitable properties. The perfection of the Creator consists in His possession of all divine properties in

¹ Cf. Weiss, *Apologie des Christentums V.* Freiburg, 1905, p. 467.

an infinite degree. The creature's perfection consists in a participation in that of the Creator, by means of the closest possible union and connection with Him, as our last end and aim and our infinite Good. The closer the union between God and the creature, the more does the latter participate in God's perfection.

This union is effected in the most perfect way through love: in heaven through the entrancing love of possessing and enjoying God; here on earth through the love that shows itself in action and preparation. The love that shows itself in action is two-fold. One kind is satisfied with our attaining our ultimate end and union with God in Heaven simply, by the indispensable and essential means, viz., by keeping the commandments, which are the straight course and the broad highway to Heaven. But the other kind of love does more. It spurs us on to unite ourselves with God in a special manner even in this life, and to enjoy Him in a higher degree in eternity. For this reason it has recourse to special means beyond the strictly obligatory. It observes the counsels, which are special means of attaining perfection, not commanded by God, but proposed by Him as in themselves highly desirable and as most pleasing to Him, though He leaves each man free to accept or refuse to use them.

Such is perfection in its theory and extent. Corresponding to the means employed, we distinguish in it two different spheres or kinds of life, viz., life in the world, in which we are satisfied with keeping the commandments, and the religious life, in which we

pledge ourselves to observe the evangelical counsels. The aim of both is the same, namely, to strive after perfection, after love here below and in Heaven. They have a common aim although they have it in different degrees. Every man and every Christian must be an ascetic, and is so really if he strives, as he ought, to attain to the perfection befitting his position. But the religious life is rightly called in a special manner "the condition of perfection" (St. Thom. 2, 2, q. 184, a. 3), not because it already possesses, but because it aims at perfection, and for this end pledges itself to use definite means, namely, to observe God's counsels. Thus, in accepting them for the purpose of attaining to perfection, it already acquires a certain degree of perfection itself, at least as far as goodwill goes, viz., a greater willingness to renounce goods and pleasures which are otherwise lawful. This involves the practice of poverty, chastity and obedience.

This does not mean that every religious, regarded individually, approaches more nearly to perfection than a layman; for it must be borne in mind that the vows or counsels are not perfection or love, but are merely the means, the preparation—although the best possible preparation—for it.¹

If the aim of the commandments is to remove the real obstacles to love, and especially sin, so it is the purpose of the vows to set aside other more remote and possible hindrances, such as are found in the enjoyment of things and pleasures that are unnecessary, although not forbidden. But the vows do not

¹ St. Thom. 2, 2, q. 184, a. 3, 4.

constitute love, and whoever has most love, which alone makes a man perfect, he is the greater ascetic, no matter what his position in life may be. Perfection is not therefore limited to any rank. The religious life may be called in a certain sense the condition of perfection, but it does not therefore follow that life in the world is the condition of imperfection. Both counsels and commandments have the same aim and end—love. The two paths are parallel, but one goes further than the other; and there is no doubt that the religious life is more favourable for the attainment of perfection.

Our Saviour's life and teaching present asceticism to us in this general and simple form. He is, of course, also the teacher of the higher perfection, when He recommends poverty, chastity, obedience, and complete renunciation of the world to those who wish to stand nearest to Him, and especially to follow Him as apostles.¹

In this way He laid the foundation of the religious life as being the condition most tending to perfection. But He never limited perfection to those who adopted this life. The crowds that listened to His instructions, and especially to the Sermon on the Mount, were very mixed. They consisted of His disciples, of people from all parts of the Promised Land, varying in rank and mental capacity, and even of heathens.²

To all alike He addressed the wonderful words of His divine doctrine and even the most exalted

¹ Matth. xix. 12 ; Mark x. 21, 29 ; Luke ix. 57 ; xii. 33.

² Matth. iv. 25 ; Luke vi. 17.

counsels of perfection, especially generosity in giving and forgiving;¹ and He concluded His exhortation with the glorious words: "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."²

Later on He did not hesitate to impart to a number of the strictest Pharisees counsels of the highest perfection.³

There is nothing in the spiritual life more difficult and more exalted than the teaching of the Cross, and yet He desired this in particular to be followed by all men.⁴

Our Saviour shows His divine wisdom in not merely suppressing the evil in the hearts of men, but in giving scope to the good, by encouraging them to strive voluntarily for what is highest. A free, noble desire of perfection is the purifying and refreshing air which is to penetrate the whole of human life. Without some kind of love beyond that of strict obligation, real love could not long exist, and the observation of His commandments cannot easily be divorced from that of His counsels. By the aid of God's grace perfection is therefore within the reach of all men.

Our Lord confirmed this doctrine both in His life and His public conduct. In His time spiritual life amongst the Jews had assumed very various forms; there were Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and followers of the Baptist; but He adopted none of these forms, excellent though they might be. He did not even appear as a Christian monk, although He was the founder of the religious life. He lived

¹ Matth. v. 39-47.

² Matth. v. 48.

³ Luke xiv. 13, 14.

⁴ Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23; xiv. 25, &c.

unmarried, but always in contact with the world ; He was poor, but not reduced to beggary ; He was constantly in the deepest contemplation, and at the same time engaged in most tiring active work ; He practised great self-denial, but always in the pleasant ways of daily life. He was the white light of perfection, containing within itself rays of all colours, and suffering them to be seen now and then in great variety.

An extraordinary degree of outward asperity is not at all a necessary condition of true strictness of life. If a man has a high and exalted purpose in his spiritual life, and employs the fitting means towards its realisation, and clings to it with strength and perseverance in spite of all difficulties, he may claim to be living strictly, provided, of course, that in his outward way of life he does not make undue concessions to effeminacy and sensuality.¹

So was it with our divine Saviour. The deep gravity of His spirit was concealed under the outward appearance and kindliness of an every-day life. We should reject therefore as unjustifiable and erroneous the suggestion that asceticism is nothing but self-inflicted torture of body and mind, or that it consists solely in the adoption of the religious life.²

¹ Suarez, *de Religione Soc. Jesu*, 1, 1, c. 9, n. 2.

² Protestantism clings to such assertions, as Ries remarks in his book, *Das geistliche Leben nach der Lehre des hl. Bernard*, p. 36, "with greater obstinacy than experience," even at the present day. Cf. Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, 51, 150, 175. Where can Harnack have discovered, as a Catholic doctrine, that complete following of Christ is possible only for monks ?

This is by no means the whole of asceticism. It is something much higher and much greater, gentle, kind and joyous like wisdom itself; it is precisely what we see in our Saviour. In other words, the true practice of a religious life is the striving after Christian perfection.

2.

In studying the practice of asceticism we must keep three things in view:—the highest rule and principle of asceticism, its aim, and finally its means.

The teaching of faith and morals is the guiding rule and highest principle of asceticism. The religious life always accepts form and direction from philosophical and theological opinions and convictions; this is proved by the history of asceticism or religious life among all nations both in ancient and modern times. Without excluding rational truths, faith—the knowledge of the supernatural—is the guide and teacher in Christian asceticism, because this is the practice of the supernatural life. Faith alone is able to give us a true and satisfactory account of God, the world and man; whilst morality, by means of commands and prohibitions, applies the truths of faith practically to our lives. Every form of asceticism is wrong and false which violates the truths and principles of reason, faith or morals. It is like a mistake in a sum, or a false conclusion drawn from correct premises. This principle may be extended to the duties of our rank in life, the rules of religious orders, and the customs generally prevailing in the

Church. Any form of asceticism that disregards these principles does not come from God, for God cannot contradict Himself. It follows likewise from what has been said, that asceticism can no more be separated from the gospel than from faith and morals; for the gospel contains the doctrine of Christian faith and morals, and asceticism forms part of this doctrine. It concerns particularly the nature and means of perfection—and in no respect can it be cut off from the gospel.¹

This was the reason why our Lord insisted so much upon faith and keeping the commandments, and why He spoke of the latter simply as the way to Heaven, for they are the expression of the binding will of God.

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”² This was the reason why he defended Himself so emphatically against the charge of despising and breaking the law, and declared that he had come, on the contrary, to fulfil it.³

He generally referred His decisions to the law;⁴ and He based His own sanctity on the fact that He did the will of His heavenly Father.⁵ Even in laying down temporary rules, that are not general and scarcely binding, He shows us that in His opinion and in accordance with His example we ought to

¹ The assertion that asceticism has nothing to do with the gospel (Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 50, &c.) can proceed only from the mistaken idea that asceticism is nothing but avoidance of the world and exterior self-torture for its own sake.

² Matth. xix. 17.

³ Matth. v. 17, 18.

⁴ Luke x. 26; Matth. xxii. 40.

⁵ John v. 30; vi. 29, 38; xiv. 31.

submit ourselves in everything to the will of God : for " It becometh us to fulfil all justice." ¹

The rigid asceticism of the Pharisees found no favour in His sight, and He condemned it sharply ; ² for to Him it was an abomination, ³ and those who upheld it set their traditions above the commandments of God, ⁴ being but disguised and whitened sepulchres, ⁵ hypocrites and blind guides. ⁶

He announces their destruction :—" Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." ⁷ It is very clear here that our Saviour wishes men to submit to the official teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees, but not to follow the example of their lives. ⁸ Still more does He require submission to the Church. ⁹

Our Lord does not leave asceticism—*i.e.*, the practice of the religious life—to the arbitrary fancies of each individual ; but He subordinates the whole sphere of religion to the Church, which has in innumerable instances made use of this power to regulate and develop religious life. We too are referred to the Church. No authority can possibly take precedence of it.

Faith without works is just as useless as works without faith.

The second point to be kept in view with regard to asceticism is its object, for in all things the object, or

¹ Matth. iii. 15 ; Luke vii. 30. ² Matth. v. 20.

³ Luke xvi. 15.

⁴ Matth. xv. 3 ; xxiii. 23.

⁵ Luke xi. 44 ; Matth. xxiii. 25, 27.

⁶ Matth. xxiii. 13, 16.

⁷ Matth. xv. 13.

⁸ Matth. xxiii. 3.

⁹ Matth. xviii. 17.

end of action, is of chief importance. It determines the direction of the will, supplies means and motives for its use, and gives its moral value and dignity to all that we do.

The object of asceticism is two-fold: one is remote and ultimate; the other is proximate and immediate.

The near and immediate object is to do the will of God with regard to our state in life. Asceticism and all that it implies must in the first place enable us to live uprightly according to our state, and really to be what we ought to be in conformity with it,—good priests, good religious, good fathers, good men and good students. For this reason St. Ignatius says that the aim of the spiritual exercises and of the whole spiritual life is to recognize the Will of God, and to shape our lives in conformity with it. Of course Christian asceticism furthers our work in the state, at home, in social life and at business, not for the sake of our calling, but because it is God's Will—although for this very reason it gives us more heart and energy to do it. The kind of asceticism which enables us to do our work perfectly in life is true, reasonable and wholesome. It pleases God, wins merit, edifies, and does real good. Any other asceticism is a luxury and a disorder in the spiritual life.

How beautifully is this truth illustrated in the life of our Saviour! His whole outward conduct and the plan of His life find their explanation and justification in this immediate object. He was to be an example and model to all, to people in the world, to priests and to religious. Hence He did not choose

to live as a hermit, but in the world amidst mankind. Hence He remained until His thirtieth year, following a common, laborious, humble and hidden way of life, because the greater part of mankind works out its salvation under similar circumstances. Hence He accomplished His work as teacher in great apostolic poverty and privation, yet all with wise moderation, so that He might be all things to all men.¹

Perfection consists neither in wealth nor in poverty ; not in seclusion from the world, and not in intercourse with it ; not in prayer and not in work, but in the wise use of all these things, in order to fulfil God's will in our state of life. It is only from this point of view that our Lord's life can be explained, for it has in many respects many features that seem strange at first sight. The will of God is the golden thread running through all the wondrous life and work of the God-man.

The ultimate object and end of asceticism, as of all created things, is the salvation of souls and everlasting happiness. To keep this ultimate object in view is most important for two reasons : first, because on it depend all the order, meaning and merit of our lives. Otherwise we run the risk of wasting our energies on things of the moment, of treating them as our final aim, and of performing even our most sacred duties mechanically. Secondly, because it enables us to do our work with vigour, perseverance and joy, for the means we have to use are often trivial, repulsive and wearisome ; and therefore we require to strengthen and hearten ourselves by keeping our great end in view.

¹ St. Thom. 3, q. 4, a. 1, 2, 3.

It is a most unfortunate mistake in asceticism to require of men work, labour, sacrifice and privation, without turning their thoughts to the great and glorious end that supplies abundant compensation for it all. To act thus is to take everything and give nothing. We cannot repeat often enough to ourselves and others that self-denial and sacrifice are not ends but means, not a final goal but a path leading to it. A generous heart is willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of a great and indispensable object. To mortify oneself merely for the sake of mortification is unjustifiable and unnatural ; but our divine Saviour, with His masterly wisdom in teaching, knew how to bring their glorious aim constantly before the minds of men, and, by showing them their great reward, to encourage them to make every sacrifice. "The kingdom of God,"¹ "the kingdom of Heaven,"² "life everlasting,"³ indescribable happiness, is the glad tidings of Christ, and the ever-recurring refrain in His teaching.

In the eight beatitudes Heaven is mentioned again and again in different ways, corresponding to each.⁴ It is promised as the final reward for everything ; for the sacrifice of a hand or a foot for the sake of salvation ;⁵ for bearing witness to Christ, even unto death ;⁶ for following Him as His apostle ;⁷ and for good works,⁸ even so small a one as giving a cup of water.⁹

¹ Luke x. 9.

³ John vi. 40.

⁵ Matth. xviii. 8, &c.

⁷ Matth. xix. 21, 28.

⁹ Matth. x. 42.

² Matth. iii. 2.

⁴ Matth. v. 3-12 ; vi. 4, 6, 18.

⁶ Matth. x. 32.

⁸ Luke xiv. 14.

As a pledge and foretaste of it here on earth, we are assured of the great benefits of inward peace and a hundredfold blessing.¹

Our Lord Himself, when speaking of His passion, was wont also to foretell His resurrection :—a proof that even to Him suffering seemed inconceivable without the corresponding joy of its reward. The Christian's whole motto is not only to live and die with Christ, but also to reign with Him.²

The third point to consider in connection with asceticism is the means it employs. They are extremely abundant, and the best way to view them collectively is to start from the idea of the spiritual life. Life is, as has been said, movement directed towards an end by some indwelling force. Our aim is perfection and heaven. Our movement directed to it consists of good, moral actions, and for them we require inward strength and outward help.

The inward strength proceeds primarily from the fundamental faculties of the soul, viz., understanding and will; and that they may act with the greatest possible perfection permanent auxiliaries are required. These are the virtues, which are really in their nature nothing but auxiliary forces, assisting us to act rightly. Good moral actions and merit, for life everlasting, are the fruits of the virtues.

From what has been said it will easily be understood that the virtues are indispensable to asceticism and the spiritual life; no less than talents and skill are to the natural life. It is true to say that perfection consists in the eminent possession

¹ Matth. xi. 29; xix. 29.

² Cf. 2 Tim. ii. 11-12.

of virtue. We have seen indeed that love really constitutes perfection, because it unites man most perfectly with God; but love cannot exist without the other virtues; they must safeguard it, adorn it and stimulate it. Theologians hold rightly that perfection consists in constant readiness and resolution to act virtuously under all circumstances. Perfection in a creature is nothing but fitness to attain his end; and we acquire this fitness by means of virtuous actions which are the steps leading up to it.

Here we have the reason why our Lord recommends so emphatically and insists upon the virtues both theological and non-theological:—and of the theological more especially on faith and charity.

He requires in the first place faith, because it is the foundation of the whole spiritual life.¹

He gives us the noblest motives in support of this necessary faith, such as His own witness to Himself and His miracles,² glorious rewards, justification,³ the prospect of great powers in this world,⁴ and of everlasting life;⁵ He praises faith,⁶ ascribes to it the power of working miracles,⁷ and seeks in all ways to make His disciples ready to defend it.⁸

On the other hand, He threatens to punish want of

¹ Mark v. 36; xi. 22; Luke viii. 25; John vi. 29; ix. 35; xi. 26.

² John v. 32-39; viii. 18; x. 25, 30; xiv. 12; Luke xxii. 70.

³ John iii. 18.

⁴ Luke xvii. 6; Matth. xvii. 19; Mark ix. 22.

⁵ John iii. 15, 36; vi. 40; x. 28. ⁶ Matth. xv. 28; viii. 10.

⁷ Matth. ix. 22, 29; Luke xvii. 19.

⁸ Matth. xvii. 18, 19; Mark viii. 17, &c.

faith with destruction in time and in eternity,¹ because the causes of it proceed from the evil one.²

Our Lord always insists upon charity as the greatest and chief commandment,³ and recommends it to His followers as His last desire and command.⁴ He instructs them as to its real nature,⁵ and promises to bestow the richest blessings upon its observance.⁶

Love of one's neighbour is not to be separated from love of God ;⁷ and it is to be displayed chiefly in works of mercy,⁸ in brotherly admonition,⁹ and in love of one's enemies.¹⁰ The motives that our Lord gives for loving one's neighbour are quite inexhaustible.¹¹ Our hope is not to be merely for temporal possessions,¹² but is to extend also to all our temporal concerns.

Of the non-theological virtues our Lord lays particular stress upon poverty, recommending the greatest poverty, both actual and spiritual,¹³ and earnestly warning His disciples against avarice and its unhappy results.¹⁴ He advocates in the second place chastity as generally understood, purity of body, mind and intention,¹⁵ and virginity, especially for

¹ John iii. 18 ; viii. 24.

² John iii. 19 ; xii. 39, 43.

³ Matth. xxii. 38 ; Luke x. 27.

⁴ John xv. 4, 9.

⁵ John xiv. 21.

⁶ John xiv. 23 ; xv. 7, 12.

⁷ John xv. 17.

⁸ Matth. v. 7 ; xviii. 35 ; Luke xvi. 19.

⁹ Matth. xviii. 15 ; Luke xvii. 3.

¹⁰ Matth. v. 44, &c.

¹¹ John xiii. 34, &c.

¹² Matth. vi. 30 ; Luke xii. 22.

¹³ Matth. v. 3 ; xix. 27, &c. ; Luke xii. 33.

¹⁴ Matth. xix. 23 ; Luke xii. 15.

¹⁵ Matth. v. 8, 28 ; vi. ; Luke xi. 34.

those who are to be apostles.¹ Thirdly, He insists upon humility,² prudence and loyalty in doing one's duty.³ Fourthly, He encourages His followers to be stout-hearted in times of suffering and persecution,⁴ and this for the noblest motives.⁵

To this subject belongs also our Lord's teaching on the subject of self-denial or mortification. It furnishes the moral strength which we must use in order to be and to do what we ought to be and do, according to the duties imposed upon us by human nature, religion and our state in life, so as to avoid evil and do good.

In our present fallen condition this is often hard, and some violence must be employed. This violence is mortification, self-denial, detachment and renunciation, all of which are but different names for the same thing, as it is considered either negatively or positively.

The importance of self-denial in our system of virtues is not that it is one definite virtue, but that it affects all the rest, playing its part wherever there is a difficulty to be overcome, and especially concerned with controlling the passions. It is therefore the key to all virtues, and hence its great importance in the spiritual life. That on which it is brought to bear is not nature as such, nor the capabilities of nature, nor even the passions in themselves, but whatever is not in order, *i.e.*, whatever is sinful, dangerous and useless

¹ Matth. xix. 12.

² Matth. vi. 2 ; Luke xvii. 10 ; xviii. 17.

³ Luke xii. 36-48 ; Matth. xxiv. 44 ; xxv. 1-30.

⁴ Matth. v. 10, &c.

⁵ Luke xii. 4-12 ; John xv. 18-27 ; xvi. 1-12.

in all these. Its aim is not to inflict injury and distress upon nature, but to train, educate and strengthen it in all that is good, beautiful and noble—all that our state renders necessary or desirable for us. In respect of its subject matter, it is either interior or exterior, according to the faculties of man that it aims at regulating, whether they are interior or exterior; and it is either voluntary mortification, if we impose it upon ourselves, or involuntary if it is imposed upon us from without by God or by our fellowmen.

Mortification appears in this form in our Lord's ascetical teaching. He calls it hatred of self; and the cross, and the doctrine of the cross, thus understood, concerns us all. No one is exempt from it. All are bound to keep the commandments; all have to avoid sin and resist evil passions; all must fulfil the duties of their state in life, and be ready to lay down their lives rather than consent to grievous sin or deny their faith.

Our Lord requires these things of all, without exception, who follow Him and acknowledge His laws. The way of His commandments is narrow.¹ His doctrine is a fire, a baptism and a sword.² He has come, not to bring peace, but war and divisions.³ Every one must take up his cross and bear it and deny himself.⁴ Every one must be prepared to lose a foot or a hand or an eye rather than give or take scandal,⁵ or deny the Son of Man before men.⁶

¹ Matth. vii. 13.

² Luke xii. 49, &c.

³ Luke xii. 51; Matth. x. 34, 35.

⁴ Matth. xvi. 24; Luke xiv. 26, 27.

⁵ Matth. xviii. 8.

⁶ Matth. x. 33.

In short, only the violent can take the kingdom of heaven.¹

The law of mortification applies to all, but not to all classes in the same degree. Our Saviour requires a much greater, even the greatest degree of detachment, from those who belong to religious orders or who wish to follow Him as His apostles. In their case the detachment from house and home,² from family and the bonds of flesh and blood,³ and from worldly matters,⁴ must be complete.⁵

Our Saviour, who is otherwise so moderate and considerate in His demands, here shows no consideration and no moderation, because it is a matter of furthering the kingdom of God.⁶ The law of mortification is hard and difficult, but it is made easier by the promises of glorious rewards, salvation of souls, sharing in our Lord's own lot in life and in the splendour of His kingdom,⁷ and even in this world peace and joy a hundredfold.⁸ As in His own case, plentiful salvation for themselves and others will be the reward given for loss of life itself.⁹

Our Lord's asceticism does not leave us in any doubt with regard to interior and exterior mortification. Both are necessary, because both body and soul are subject to the consequences of original sin, and each is to the other a cause of sin.¹⁰

¹ Matth. xi. 12.

² Luke ix. 60 ; Matth. x. 37 ; xix. 21.

³ Luke xiv. 26 ; Matth. xii. 48 ; xix. 29.

⁴ Luke ix. 62.

⁵ Matth. xix. 29.

⁶ Luke ix. 60 ; xiv. 26 ; Mark x. 29.

⁷ Luke ix. 23-26.

⁸ Mark x. 21 ; Matth. xix. 21.

⁹ John xii. 24.

¹⁰ Matth. v. 28.

But interior mortification is more important as being the end of exterior, as alone having any moral value,¹ and as being able to some extent to serve as a substitute for exterior mortification,² which must be guided by outward circumstances.³

Such is the doctrine of Christian mortification. Rightly viewed and understood it is based both upon the essence of Christianity and upon our high and reasonable nature. Whoever determines to be either a Christian or a gentleman must do violence to himself and overcome himself. Even voluntary mortification, the much decried self-inflicted tortures of the saints, is in its nature justified by the principles of faith and Christianity. There are especially three truths of faith on which this foundation rests. The first is the fall of man ; we are no longer what we were, and what it was God's intention that we should be. Our love of sin bears witness to this fact, and shows us daily of what we are capable, unless we constantly have at hand and use the means of self-conquest. Evil is within us as a law, as a standing force,⁴ and law and force can be overcome only by law and force. Therefore our self-denial must be general and fundamental.

The second truth on which voluntary mortification is based is our redemption through Christ. His example, consisting as it does of mortification and self-denial, shows us how we ought to rid ourselves of the bondage of sin. Can there, moreover, be anything more noble and more beautiful than, from motives of

¹ Luke xi. 39.

² Matth. ix. 11 ; xv. 11.

³ Matth. ix. 15.

⁴ Rom. vii. 21 ; Luke xiv. 31, &c.

reverence and love of Christ, and with the intention of making reparation to God for the sins of others, to impose upon oneself voluntary penance for them?

The third truth that supports voluntary mortification is the certainty of an everlasting life, in which we shall receive a reward for every good deed done on earth, and especially for every sacrifice made for the sake of the love of God and man.¹

Christian abnegation is far exalted above the practical wisdom of the children of this world, but they too are not afraid to deny themselves something for a time, in order to enjoy it better later on. Thus a worldly man works and saves in order to have a comfortable old age, free from anxiety; and St. Paul tells us that the man who would win a race lives frugally and temperately for the sake of a corruptible crown.² Does he obtain it? Not always. But our crown is assured and is incorruptible.³ Faith and Christianity are, however, indispensable; the Cross is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness;⁴ but, to them that are called, the power and wisdom of God.

Happiness and self-renunciation are inseparably connected in our Lord's asceticism, and sum up the whole contents of His Gospel. The latter is the means, the former the end, in the splendour of which the labour and harshness of the means receive their explanation, consecration, and even their wonderful power of attraction.

The exterior (objective) means of asceticism, pro-

¹ Matth. xvi. 25, 27.

² I Cor. ix. 25.

³ I Peter 4.v.

⁴ I Cor. i. 23.

vided by our Saviour, are partly ordinary and partly extraordinary. The ordinary means proceed from the three great offices of the Church, its teaching, pastoral and priestly functions. The first means is to make known the Church's doctrines on faith and morals: for it is only in faith and in the laws and the commandments that asceticism finds an infallible exterior rule to govern its life and action. It must therefore strive constantly to acquire a knowledge of faith and the commandments, and to put them in practice as we have seen above. The second means is direction, not merely by the highest authorities in the Church, but still more by intermediate superiors and spiritual guides. The system ordained by God and Christ that man shall be directed to his goal by men, and that the Church shall be governed by human rulers,¹ affects also each individual in relation to his own immediate superior. In the spiritual life it has always been regarded as a fatal error to acknowledge no master, but to wish to go one's own way. Our Lord's words, "he that despiseth you, despiseth Me," and "if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch,"² certainly find their application here. Obedience to one's spiritual director undoubtedly coincides with our Lord's principles, and therefore submission to direction is a fundamental feature in all sound asceticism.

The means of grace is the third of the exterior instruments of asceticism. It is one of the chief truths of Christianity that in the spiritual life

¹ Matth. xvi. 18; John xxi. 15; Matth. xviii. 18.

² Luke x. 16, and vi. 39.

we are nothing without sanctifying grace, and can do nothing without actual grace. The essence of the supernatural state is the possession of sanctifying grace, and no good work is possible without the aid of actual grace. For this reason our Lord ordained and instituted in His Church certain channels of grace, in order that we might be able to attain to this supernatural life and activity. These channels of grace are the holy sacraments and prayer.

By baptism, supernatural life is imparted to the soul;¹ by penance the life imparted in baptism is restored;² by Holy Communion it is maintained, strengthened and developed;³ by Confirmation strength is given to confess our faith; by Extreme Unction comfort in sickness; by Matrimony and Holy Orders the graces needed for fulfilling the duties of these two particular states. The sacraments are the foundation and starting point of asceticism for all classes of Christians. As a general rule in order to make progress in the spiritual life we have recourse to penance and the Holy Sacrament of the altar.

In one respect prayer is still more important, because we can always turn to it and obtain all graces by its aid. By prayer we understand both the public worship of God and private prayer, which again is divided into vocal and mental. Our Saviour did not leave us without instruction on the subject of prayer. He taught us what ought to be the nature of our prayer—by giving us a form to use in the "Our Father"⁴—and what characters it ought to possess.

¹ Matth. xxviii. 19; John iii. 3.

² John xx. 23.

³ John vi. 54-59; Matth. xxvi. 26.

⁴ Matth. vi. 9, &c.

Everywhere He gave His disciples urgent motives for prayer, and confirmed His teaching by His own example.¹

How could He, the teacher of truth, and of all true virtue and godliness, have failed to teach and encourage His followers to pray, since prayer is of such absolute importance for the spiritual life of each individual and for the maintenance of religion as a whole? Prayer is the great and general means of grace; in it, and especially in meditation, we learn the truths regarding faith and morals in their foundation, depth, height, beauty, consolation and application to life; we impress them upon our understanding and will, and by means of the principles drawn from the truths of faith we obtain a firm rule for our guidance in practical life. Through prayer we become really men of faith and virtue. There is no more thorough and easier method of training the heart than prayer. Whilst we are with Him, God transforms us into His own likeness, and this is why, in the opinion of theologians, meditation is morally necessary for everyone who aspires to perfection. It is the best school of virtue and sanctity.

To the province of prayer belong also devotions, practical results of prayer, the union with God, and general channels of graces. Our Lord's great devotion was to His heavenly Father, of whom He speaks with the greatest reverence; His Father is His beginning and His end;² He is Himself the way to the Father and His ambassador,³ His own doctrine and

¹ Luke xi. 1-13; xviii. 1-8; Matth. vi. 9-13; vii. 7-11.

² Matth. xi. 25; John vi. 58; xvi. 27, 28. ³ John xiv. 6; iii. 34.

miracles are the doctrine and works of His Father ;¹ it is to the Father that he prays both in secret and in public.² Our Saviour's mission was to reveal the Father, to honour Him and vindicate His honour ; and to do His will was Christ's whole life work.³ In a fitting manner He honoured also the Holy Ghost ; making known His majesty and divinity.⁴ He allowed Himself to be guided by the Holy Ghost,⁵ and ascribed His own miracles to Him.⁶ He even founded and ratified the devotion to His own Mother in reference to her sanctity and dignity as Mother of God.⁷

These are precisely the devotions which, with that to our Lord's divine Humanity, are dearest to Christians.

Among the exterior means of asceticism there are also some that are extraordinary, permitted but not ordained by God, which are nevertheless of great importance in the spiritual life. The first class of these are temptations, the skirmishes, battles and sieges in the spiritual conflict. What has been effected in us by prayer, grace, and the practice of virtue, appears under temptation. Our Lord did not neglect to instruct us on this subject. As temptations proceed not only from ourselves, but also from the devil and

¹ John v. 19 ; xvii. 14 ; ix. 4 ; x. 37 ; xiv. 10.

² Matth. vi. 9 ; xi. 25 ; xv. 36 ; xxvi. 27 ; John xi. 41 ; xvii. 1 ; Luke xxiii. 46.

³ John iv. 34 ; v. 30 ; vi. 38.

⁴ Matth. xii. 32 ; xxviii. 19 ; John iii. 5 ; xiv. 16, 17, 26 xv. 26 ; xvi. 13 ; xx. 22.

⁵ Matth. iv. 1 ; Luke iv. 18 ; x. 21.

⁶ Matth. xii. 28.

⁷ Luke xi. 28.

the world, He has taught us about the evil one's methods of attack and warfare,¹ and about the scandals of the world.² He was willing to be tempted Himself, that He might give us a practical example of the way in which to resist temptations.³ It is certainly instructive to consider in the life of our Lord how the evil spirits behaved towards Him, and how He treated them.⁴

The second class of extraordinary temptations consists in persecutions, which play an important part in the life of individuals and of the Church. Our Saviour included them in His teaching and example. He foretold that the Church would undergo many grievous persecutions;⁵ but He did not fail to supply the strongest motives for bearing them with patience and courage.⁶

This courage under persecution and a generous love of the cross is the summit of Christian perfection, a masterpiece of heroism and a brilliant testimony to the divine nature of our religion.

Mysticism also belongs to the spiritual life or asceticism, and concerns it on its higher and extraordinary side. It is the highest step in asceticism, and consists of such knowledge and powers as are not possible to us under the influence of ordinary grace. It is only under the influence of special

¹ Luke xi. 24-26 ; xxii. 31 ; Mark xiv. 38.

² Matth. xviii. 7. ³ Matth. iv. 1-11 ; Luke iv. 1-13.

⁴ Luke iv. 31-35 ; Mark v. 2-13.

⁵ Luke xvii. 22-37 ; xxi. 12-19 ; xxii. 35-37 ; Matth. v. 10-12 ; xxiv. 9-28 ; John xvi. 1-5.

⁶ Luke xii. 1-12 ; John xv. 18-27.

extraordinary graces that the Christian can hope to unite his understanding and will with God, in such a way as to be receptive rather than active, and to acquire not merely a moral, but a spiritually perceptible certainty. The manifestations of this extraordinary life embrace all the higher degrees of prayer and activity, from contemplation to visions, revelations and other wonderful things affecting ourselves and others. Our Saviour did not teach and speak expressly and fully about this condition of the spiritual life. He indicated its existence and nature in mysterious words recorded by St. John (xiv. 23). He supplied us with no assured means of gaining these special favours, for none exist, and they all depend finally upon God. To prepare us for them He only bade us consider His own asceticism, and in so doing He displayed the unerring skill of His divine wisdom used for our instruction.

Such is in broad outline the asceticism of our divine Saviour. It is simple and exalted, plain, but full of deep mysteries. Being natural, great and broad, it is sufficient for all, for the most modest as well as for the most noble dispositions and requirements of heart and mind. It is majestic and truly divine in its aim, its means, its results and effects. It is powerful, especially in virtue of the grace that it brings with it, and of the example of its author. What He taught finds its confirmation, its fairest and most attractive expression in the example of His life. He Himself, His personality and His life, are the realisation of His doctrine. He is the way, the

truth and the life ;¹ in Him are summed up all revelation and all the virtues that we have to practise. Virtue as displayed in His life attracts all by the dignity and charm of His personality ; in His suffering it triumphs over every resistance offered by the world and hell ; and in His resurrection it lays hold of the crown of immortality for itself and for all who follow in His steps. Our Saviour is the Author, the Model and the Reward of Christian asceticism, which is indeed nothing else but the following of Christ.

3.

We may deduce a few conclusions from what has been said.

The first is that there is a wide distinction between true and false asceticism. The statements made serve as boundary stones, marking them off from one another, and showing how they may be recognized for what they are really worth. A false asceticism starts from philosophical and theological errors, and is directed by them. It is with asceticism as it is with opinions about God, mankind and the world. This is proved by all the ascetical systems of ancient and modern times, by those of the Platonists, Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics, Neo-Platonists, Gnostics, Manicheans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Buddhists, Brahmins and Parsees, and of the Protestant, rationalist, pantheistic, and Jansenist sects. It is quite certain that no asceticism is good which offends against reason, conscience and duty. A false asceticism mistakes its

¹ John xiv. 6,

own object, especially with regard to mortification, which it treats not as a means but as an end, and thereby deadens the faculties. Any asceticism is false which lays hold of and practises only one side of the spiritual life, and only one means at the cost of the whole ; which disciplines only the exterior and not the interior ; which checks only one passion and overlooks the others, which is willing to pray and receive the sacraments, but not to overcome self. Any form of asceticism is dangerous which runs wild, and shuns guidance, and seeks to accomplish its work with impetuosity and violence. A so-called mystical tendency in asceticism may become positively fatal. It consists in despising or neglecting all proper training of the intellect, and relying solely on that of the will, and especially of the feelings ; or in laying too much stress upon what is extraordinary and is affected very slightly, or not at all, by the action of our free will ; or in desiring to attain at once to the high aim of union with God, without adopting the means of reaching it, which are thorough purification of the heart and complete mortification. Pitiable and disastrous, but quite in keeping with the spirit of our age, is a kind of enervated asceticism. Our weak nerves cannot tolerate the rough but wholesome methods of old ; forcible reflexions on mortal sin, death and hell ; firm and strong principles, and any tests of poverty and humility worthy of the name are far too much to suggest. Everything must be easy and pleasant, and cost no exertion. We do not desire any real means, but trifling methods, no courses of treatment, but soothing remedies ; we prefer to rely

on pretty little devotions and other spiritual frippery. At the present time the fashion in spiritual things is much like the fashion in dress, there is much display and little reality. If any sound result is to be obtained, we must go back to the old methods in asceticism as much as in ecclesiastical learning and art.

A second conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing considerations is the great importance of asceticism, both for the individual and for the whole life of the Church and Christianity. Christianity is life, and life is action. Asceticism is action, and therefore is true, sound and living Christianity. There is just as much virtue, purity, real hold on religion, vigour, and power of resistance and diffusion :—in a word, there is just as much Christianity in the people, the clergy and the religious orders as there is asceticism.

Whatever the Church is, she is that in virtue of her asceticism ; she is the leaven of mankind, the light of the world and the salt of the earth, but without asceticism she is of no avail. Asceticism is her soul, her strength, like Samson's mysterious lock of hair. It is impossible for the Church to be overthrown as long as she retains this talisman of her power. This is proved by history. The Church has constantly renewed her strength by means of devotions, religious orders and saints, and all these belong to her asceticism. It has produced great men who have extended the Kingdom of Christ, the saints, the men of God, who fashion and renew the world. Asceticism is the true home, the island of saints.

This being so we ought to rejoice at every means

of promoting this sacred asceticism in us; we must welcome them gladly and adopt them with loving zeal. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are means of this kind, whether in the form of retreats for individuals or for certain classes of people, or in the form of missions, which are retreats for people in general. The exercises are a logically arranged and consistently worked out system of doctrinal and practical instructions, tending to the renewal, elevation and strengthening of the spiritual life. Their exclusive aim is ascetic, and therefore a theologian has called them a noviciate in the spiritual life, intended for all;¹ and this is what they have always proved themselves to be. They were designed by Providence not merely as a means of edification, salvation and sanctification for innumerable Christians of every class, but as a mighty instrument of the reform which has been accomplished in the Church since the revolt of Protestantism. It is to a great extent through them that Catholicism has regained its vigour and assumed a new form. They are a wonderful compound of the most powerful remedies contained in our Christian religion. In them lies the strength of faith and of the truths of salvation, which are presented to us in psychological order. In them we learn the power of prayer and of the Sacraments, the power of God's grace working in co-operation with man. We may and must expect a great and glorious result from such exercises; and we have witnessed such results in our own day. When the struggle against the Church broke out in Germany, in the

¹ Suarez, *De Religione Soc. Jesu*, l. 9, c. 5, n. 2.

clergy and people the storm encountered a rock which it could submerge, but not destroy ; and those gifted with insight know how this firm rock came into being. Not long before the outbreak of the struggle, one of the most eminent princes of the Church said :—" I begin to fear, when I see all that has been done and is still being done in Germany to strengthen the faith through the self-sacrificing efforts of a brave . . . clergy, and the work, blessed as it is by God, of religious houses, that have sprung up on every side, and especially by means of missions and retreats. Such wonders and signs point to coming troubles." ¹ " Everyone that heareth these my words, and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock." ²

¹ Baudri, *Der Erzbischof von Köln Joh. von Geissel*, 252 ; in Pfülf's *Kardinal v. Geissel II. Freiburg*, 1896, 579.

² Matth. vii. 24, 25.

II.

OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR'S ART OF EDUCATION.

THE Gospel is indeed a school ; everything can be learnt from it, even the art of arts, the art of educating others.

It is not only interesting and pleasant, but also very useful, to study the Gospel by the light of correct principles of education, and to observe how our Lord satisfies all the requirements and gives us in Himself the most perfect model of a teacher. This little essay will touch on three chief points ; the qualities that an instructor ought to possess, the methods of education, and lastly its results. These three thoughts form the background, throwing into prominence the example of our Divine Lord.

I.

In the first place it is of the utmost importance that the teacher should possess those qualities which fit him to perform his honourable and important task of education. They are four in number : authority, love, wisdom and unselfishness.

Authority is above all things indispensable to a

teacher. Education has to train a person for the work he has to do and qualify him for it. This can, strictly speaking, be done only by God. In one sense education is a continuation and completion of the act of creation; and human beings can participate in it only when commissioned by God, and with His help. All lawful educators—parents, teachers appointed by them, and the Church—derive their authority from God and discharge their office in His name. They ought to regard themselves as His representatives, demand from their pupils respect, obedience, confidence and love for His sake, and, as far as they are able, being but human beings, they must adopt God's intentions and system of education with regard to their pupils. True authority consists in this.

How thoroughly, truly and nobly was this condition fulfilled in the case of our Lord! He was not only given us by God as our instructor, but He is instructor and God in one person. "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."¹

Christ always laid claim to this supremely important qualification for the work of education. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."²

"He that seeth me, seeth the Father also."³

"You call me Master and Lord, and you say well for so I am."⁴

"One is your Master, Christ."⁵

"I am the way, the truth and the life."⁶

¹ Matth. xvii. 5.

³ John xiv. 9.

⁵ Matth. xxiii. 10.

² John vii. 16.

⁴ John xiii. 13.

⁶ John xiv. 6.

Here we have the true and living God, the sovereign Wisdom of the Father, that has from the beginning created, led and guided the human race.¹ In the work of education He still lays on us His creative hand.

Precisely because the teacher represents God and the parents, and claims confidence and love for their sake, he too must have love, especially for the young, who stand in need of education. Whoever does not love children cannot educate; such a one may be an official overseer, but not an instructor. If he has no love, he cannot represent God and the parents, and he will be able to accomplish nothing. In order to influence and educate his pupils, he must first of all win their love and confidence, but only love can beget love, and therefore a teacher must have a heart full of love, and must express it in word and deed.

What a beautiful example our Lord sets us here! His heart was truly filled with love, which poured itself forth in numberless ways towards all,² especially towards those in need of help,³ and children.

One day many mothers brought their little ones to Him to bless them, as they were still too young to receive any other spiritual boon from Him. The apostles, seeing, probably, the number of the children, and knowing that our Saviour did everything thoroughly, thought the matter too trivial to justify His exerting Himself, and repulsed the mothers. But our Lord rebuked them for acting thus, had the

¹ Wisdom, chaps. ix., x., xi.

² John xiii. 1 ; xv. 9-13.

³ Matth. xi. 5, 28.

children brought to Him, and exhausted Himself in pouring out upon them tokens of goodness and love, saying the memorable words:—"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is of such."¹

What noble motives for reverencing and loving children has our Saviour given us in these words! In these little ones He saw the favourites of the angels² and of His heavenly Father; His own younger brothers and the co-heirs of His kingdom, to which they are entitled through sanctifying grace and the beautiful characteristics of childish virtues. He saw all the noble aspirations, still dormant in their hearts, and the great future when these aspirations would develop, if careful training encouraged them. But He also perceived the misery and ruin that would result from want or abuse of education. He was aware of the dark designs of those ancient tempters, the world and the devil, whose schemes can be permanently successful only if they effect the corruption of the young.³

He saw all this, and in order to protect those He loved so much He stooped to them, full of loving care, took them in His arms, pressed them to His heart, and with His blessing armed them against evil. How much have these words conduced to save the young in this world! How often have they turned hearts to Christ with love and devotion! How many institutions for the training and rescue of children have been called into existence by them! They

¹ Matth. xix. 14 ; Luke xviii. 16.

² Matth. xviii. 10.

³ Matth. xviii. 6, 7.

ought to impress upon all engaged in education how dear the children should be to them, and what love and reverence they should have for them. We can see, too, from other passages in the Gospel, that children gladly came to our Saviour, and felt at home and happy in His presence,¹ because they knew that He loved them, and that His heart desired nothing but their good. Children ought to feel thus with regard to all who have to educate them.

Sympathy, gentleness and patience belong to love. They are all its natural effects ; and the work of education is often very difficult owing to the weakness, frivolity, superficiality and forgetfulness of the young, and often, too, in consequence of the mistakes made by other teachers. The instructor, if he is to attain his end, must have inexhaustible patience. According to St. Thomas, on account of the patience that a teacher must exercise, he deserves a sort of martyr's crown. How great was the patience and gentleness displayed by our Lord in His work of teaching during His public life ! He was patient with His disciples, who were so little apt to learn ;² patient with the importunity, uncouthness and selfishness of the people ;³ patient with the indifference and selfishness of the aristocrats,⁴ and even with His heavenly Father, who permitted only a slow and scanty harvest to result from His labour. Our Lord did not complain, or only on rare occasions ;⁵ He caused

¹ Luke ix. 47 ; Matth. xviii. 2 ; Mark ix. 35.

² Matth. xiii. 36 ; xv. 15 ; Acts i. 6.

³ Mark iii. 10 ; v. 31 ; Luke v. 1 ; Matth. xiv. 13, 14 ; John vi. 26.

⁴ John vii. 48.

⁵ Mark viii. 17 ; ix. 18.

no sudden change in things or circumstances, but left unlimited freedom to all to turn to Him and make use of His love and patience. It had been foretold of Him that He should act thus.¹

The source of this patience and compassion was not only the tenderness of His heart, which at the sight of misery, and even of temporal suffering,² caused His eyes to fill with tears, and softened even a well-deserved rebuke with a glance of pity;³ but it was also His clear penetration and wisdom, which could appreciate the depths of weakness and infirmity on the part of His creatures. He was compassionate and patient, not only because He was kind, but also because He was wise. Impatience is always unwise and useless, for it neither knows nor improves mankind. It does no good and much harm; but "patience hath a perfect work."⁴

We cannot work miracles as our Saviour did, but we can practise patience, and it has the same effect on men as the gift of miracles. It secures respect, it wins love, and has the blessing of the cross, without which nothing can prosper.

The third quality that a teacher must possess is prudence or wisdom to direct his zeal. Christian prudence aims at what is good, and chooses the right means to secure it. It is the first virtue necessary for those who have to guide others; and without it nothing can be brought to a satisfactory end, but all is spoilt. Unless we possess it, God can make use of

¹ Matth. xii. 18 ; Is. xlii.

² Matth. ix. 36 ; Luke xix. 41 ; Is. lxi. 2 ; John xi. 35.

³ Mark iii. 5.

⁴ James i. 4.

us neither for the work of education, nor in any other way.

Knowledge of human nature, self-control, counsel and prayer are all aids to it. How wise and prudent was our Lord in all His dealings and with all people ! What wise moderation did He observe in His revelations and requirements !¹

How much self-control did He display in His treatment of His enemies, even when His zeal led Him to oppose them openly !² Think of the two occasions when he purified the Temple.³ He was always careful to avert mistakes and unfortunate occurrences ; and this is an important element in all wise government.⁴

Finally we perceive in our Saviour the grand qualities of disinterestedness and blamelessness of life. To Him teaching and training were not means of earning a livelihood, but honourable duties, and the task assigned to Him by His Father for His glory and the salvation of men. For fulfilling these duties He obtained no temporal reward, not money enough to enable Him to live without alms,⁵ or to pay the Temple-tax without a miracle.⁶ He practised in a still higher degree all that He taught—poverty,⁷ detachment from all possessions,⁸ work,⁹ love of enemies,¹⁰ love of humility,¹¹ and love of the cross.¹²

¹ Mark ii. 18, &c. ; x. 19, &c. ² Matth. xii. 15-21 ; xiv. 13.

³ John ii. 14-19 ; Mark xi. 15-17.

⁴ Matth. xiv. 22 ; Luke viii. 39 ; ix. 52 ; Mark viii. 26.

⁵ Luke viii. 3 ; John xii. 6. ⁶ Matth. xvii. 23-26.

⁷ Matth. viii. 20.

⁸ Matth. iii. 13 ; Mark iii. 33.

⁹ Matth. viii. 24 ; John iv. 6. ¹⁰ Luke xxii. 51 ; xxiii. 34.

¹¹ Luke vii. 23.

¹² Luke xii. 50 ; xviii. 31 ; Matth. xvi. 23.

Therefore He could raise His voice, freely and undismayed, warning and testing men, and bearing witness to truth and justice. He did this under all circumstances, for He was all straightforwardness, fairness and justice. In the dispute between Martha and Mary, He did not approve of the faithful and zealous housekeeper.¹ The unseemly request made by the mother of Zebedee's sons was gently but decidedly refused.² He did not spare those who stood near Him, or the powerful.³ Even His enemies had to acknowledge His honesty, and that He taught the way of God in truth, having no respect of persons.⁴ He was a born king of truth,⁵ and the most perfect ideal of a teacher and instructor.

2.

Our Saviour gave practical proof of these excellent qualifications for instruction in the admirable methods that He employed.

A real, a correct, system of education has to keep four things in view: the aim of the training, the character and peculiarities of the pupil, the means to be employed, and the manner of employing them.

The aim of education is to make the whole person, body and soul, fit primarily to attain his own immediate end on earth, or fit for the rank and position that he is to occupy in Church or state, and also to fit him to attain his great and ultimate

¹ Luke x. 38, &c.

² Matth. xx. 20, &c.

³ Mark vi. 4 ; Luke iv. 23 ; ix. 44 ; xiii. 32 ; xiv. 7.

⁴ Matth. xxii. 16.

⁵ John xviii. 37.

object, namely, salvation and happiness in heaven. Man must not be educated merely for himself; he is not his own final aim. Nor ought he to be trained solely for others, for the state or for this world, but for heaven. Everything else must be made subservient to this great ultimate end. Man is here in order to arrive at everlasting happiness in heaven by doing his work in the state or in the Church as well as he can, in conformity with God's Will, for His honour and for the good of men. This thought brings unity and order into all our attempts at education. Our Saviour constantly emphasised this great and everlasting end, and laid it down as the object of all effort in this life. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"¹ "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal."²

A second and most important point in education is in reference to the person in need of it. A sound and useful education must be adapted to the nature, character and requirements of the pupil, and be based on them. A pupil is a human being, and as such is a wonderfully exalted creature, a child and representative of God in the visible world, a being equipped with many noble faculties of body and soul. He is immortal and free. He was originally good, but is so no more in consequence of the fall of man. But he is not altogether bad, though full of disorderly and dangerous tendencies and passions, over which his will must dominate and rule. He is therefore both capable

¹ Matth. xvi. 26.

² John xii. 25.

of and in need of education. The bad in him must be suppressed and exterminated, and good planted and cultivated, not merely under external compulsion, but by external direction and internal determination. He must not be permitted to abuse his freedom, but neither must he be deprived of it. The highest form of education consists in enabling him to use it well and rightly.

Our Saviour took all this into account with tenderness and decision. In His eyes man is the child of His heavenly Father,¹ and to be treated therefore with great respect.² He takes him as he is into His school, and brings His instruction and influence to bear upon his understanding, will, imagination, body and soul. We can see from His discourses how beautifully He did this. He respects man's liberty, and appeals to it for every purpose, for the necessary fulfilment of everyday duties,³ as well as for the highest efforts after perfection.⁴ But no less decidedly does He assert the presence of evil in man, and insist incessantly upon mortification and self-denial. There is hardly any point which our Lord mentions so often and so emphatically as this matter of education and training.⁵ In the most varied ways and forms He recurs again and again to it.⁶

As means of education we generally reckon:—instruction, rewards and punishments, and the practical use of what has been learnt. We can observe how

¹ Matth. v. 45 ; vi. 9 ; xxiii. 9.

² Mark x. 14.

³ Matth. xix. 17.

⁴ Matth. xix. 21.

⁵ Matth. xvi. 24 ; Luke ix. 23 ; xvii. 33 ; John xii. 25.

⁶ Matth. vii. 13 ; Luke xiii. 24.

our Saviour employed all these means in the most abundant, wise and emphatic manner.

The instruction that He gave embraced both the end and the means. The last end is Heaven, that is to say, supernatural; so the means also must be supernatural. As subjective means He recommends the supernatural virtues, of which we become capable when sanctifying grace is poured into our souls. They are in the first place the theological virtues: faith,¹ hope,² love of God and our neighbour.³ Among the moral virtues He lays most stress upon poverty and detachment from temporal and material possessions,⁴ purity of heart and body,⁵ works of mercy,⁶ love of our enemies,⁷ and love of the cross.⁸ As objective means He refers to the commandments,⁹ which are the straight road to heaven; and, as means of grace, to the holy sacraments¹⁰ and to prayer.¹¹ All this is not to be arbitrary and according to the fancy of each individual, but in agreement with and subordination to the visible hierarchical Church, the organisation, work and jurisdiction of which He determined.¹²

This is the outline of the means of education chosen and used by our Saviour.

His instructions on all these subjects are rich in power of attraction, conviction and adaptation to every

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

² John xvi. 33.

³ Mark xii. 30, 31.

⁴ Matth. v. 3; xix. 29

⁵ Matth. v. 8, 28; vi. 22; xix. 11, 12.

⁶ Matth. v. 7.

⁷ Matth. v. 44.

⁸ Matth. v. 10.

⁹ Matth. xix. 17.

¹⁰ Matth. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 16; John v. 54; Luke xxii. 19.

¹¹ Luke xi. 2, &c.; xviii. 1, &c. ¹² Matth. xvi. 18; xviii. 18.

faculty of man—his understanding, imagination, will and feelings. He describes Heaven as His Father's magnificent palace, containing many mansions;¹ as a great family house,² a splendid feast,³ a great and everlasting kingdom,⁴ in short, as containing all power, glory and joy.

He promises this kingdom as a reward for all virtues,⁵ and even for the most trifling good work.⁶

Everywhere He finds means of stimulating the will. He derives them from all sources, from the natural and the supernatural order; from the proverbial wisdom of everyday life, and from views of the highest perfection.⁷

He often refers to quite natural motives.⁸ His desire is to make man altogether good, and to direct all his faculties towards the supernatural. He wishes to reveal the harmony between nature and what is above nature; to make nature honourable, and raise it to true, supernatural, and perfect virtue. For this reason He does not demand of man to renounce and exterminate his natural passions. On the contrary, he is to retain them; but he is also to keep them under control, ennoble them, and, setting before them the one certain and unchanging end, he is to use them as means and instruments for its attainment.⁹

It is a peculiarity of the Christian law, and of Christ's method of educating men, that He does not

¹ John xiv. 2.

² Luke xiii. 25.

³ Matth. xxii. 2; Luke xiv. 16. ⁴ Matth. v. 3, &c.; Mark i. 14.

⁵ Matth. v. 3, &c.

⁶ Mark ix. 40.

⁷ Matth. v. 47, 48.

⁸ Luke xiv. 8; xvi. 8; Matth. vii. 12; xxvi. 52.

⁹ Matth. x. 28; xviii. 4.

only lead them to avoid evil, by laying down laws and prohibitions with regard to the good works, obligatory upon them ; but He also gives counsels, shows the way to perfection, and thus opens up unlimited scope to the energy of human generosity, and the noble qualities of men's hearts. Our Saviour desires to train men to generosity and highmindedness. The gospel is full of every kind of high counsels ;¹ it creates a standard for our efforts after Christian perfection.²

How modest is the degree of instruction imparted by our Lord ! He had it in his power to reveal so much, but did not do so ; and contented Himself with a comparatively few, but important, truths, desiring to see them brought to bear upon life—a proof that in the education of man, training of the will is more essential than development of the intellect. He taught only what was necessary, useful and elevating ; what comforted, raised and expanded the hearts of men. He knew at once how to make good use of even trivial questions ;³ and every one of His principles is qualified to make a man a saint.

Another means of education is the use of rewards and punishments. The gospel abounds in promises of rewards. Our Lord demands much, but He promises still more ; and man is to be rewarded for all that he does. We read again and again, "Blessed are ye."⁴ He seems to ask only in order to have an

¹ Matth. v. 40, 41, 44, 48 ; Luke x. 37 ; xiv. 12 ; xvii. 10 ;
xxi. 4.

² Matth. xix. 21.

³ Luke xiii. 23 ; xix. 11 ; Matth. xix. 11, 12 ; xxi. 20, &c.

⁴ Matth. v. 3-11 ; John xiii. 17.

opportunity of giving. He is neither reserved nor sparing in recognition and praise. Wherever He found goodness, He praised it.¹ Very often He ascribed the miracles that He worked to the faith of those on whose behalf they had been performed.² He did not merely promise what was good in the future, but He actually did good to all. He knew the hearts of men, and that love cannot be produced to order, but must be called forth by love; and love does good. His miracles were more than evidence of His divinity; they were tokens especially of His goodness, by means of which He won hearts to accept His teaching. He was good, and went about doing good.³

But rebukes, threats and punishments are also means of education. They stimulate the memory, quicken the understanding and faculty of attention, and subdue the will by fear. Our Lord used these means also, but with the difference, as He often proclaimed,⁴ that He never set out with the intention of causing fear and inflicting punishment, that He had recourse to these means much less often than to encouragement and rewards, and that He made use of threats and chastisement only after a time, when necessity required, and when nothing else had any effect. It was not until the third year of His public life, when He left Galilee,⁵ and especially after the hatred and unbelief of the Jews had led them to

¹ Matth. viii. 10; xv. 28; Luke vii. 44.

² Matth. ix. 22; Luke vii. 50; xvii. 19; xviii. 42; Mark x. 52.

³ John vii. 12; Acts x. 38.

⁴ John iii. 17; xii. 47; Luke ix. 56.

⁵ Luke x. 13.

make open attacks upon Him at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple,¹ that He began publicly to declare that Israel would be punished with rejection ; and He did this with increasing emphasis, because nothing else was any longer of avail.²

He threatened the whole nation, but also separate classes, such as the Pharisees ;³ and He used various similes to warn individuals also of the chastisement due to their offences.⁴ We can hear in His denunciations the serious and impressive language of the master and teacher, and the terrible rebukes of the eternal judge. But wherever He found honesty of purpose and goodwill, His reproaches were touching in their gentleness,⁵ only occasionally did He speak more sternly.⁶ What a wonderful example of a master's refinement in this respect has He left us in His treatment of Judas ! A year before His shameful betrayal our Lord began to warn him gently but emphatically.⁷ With what moderation did He reply to Judas' impertinent, unfeeling and blasphemous remark at the supper in Bethany !⁸ How did He exert Himself, and even at the last moment do everything that He could, to save the unhappy man, by clearly and definitely foretelling his shameful deed,

¹ Luke xi. 31 ; xiii. 3, 25 ; xiv. 24 ; xix. 27.

² Luke xix. 43 ; xx. 16 ; xxi. 24 ; Matth. xxii. 7 ; xxiii. 38.

³ Luke xi. 39 ; xvi. 15, &c. ; xx. 17 ; Matth. xxiii.

⁴ Matth. v. 20, 22, 25, 29 ; xiii. 30, 48 ; xxv. 41 ; Mark ix. 41, 43.

⁵ Mark ix. 32 ; Matth. xx. 22 ; John xx. 27 ; xxi. 15.

⁶ Mark viii. 17, &c. ; Matth. xvi. 23 ; xvii. 16.

⁷ John vi. 71.

⁸ John xii. 7 ; Matth. xxvi. 10.

and briefly but emphatically revealing its horror, its cruelty and its terrible consequences:¹ while at the same time He was so full of considerate care to screen his honour and his life from the disciples.² With what divine calm and patience did He at length receive the traitor's kiss!³

The third means of education is the practical application of what has been taught and recommended. The pupil must not only know, but he must be able to use his knowledge. This practical application consisted in tests imposed by our Saviour upon those who came to Him and wished to follow Him. He exercised particularly their faith and confidence. In many cases He required faith as a condition and preliminary to His miracles.⁴ And this was wise, for thus He enabled men to co-operate with Him, and benefited them both in body and soul. He exercised His followers also in humility. The heathen woman from Syro-Phœnicia had to endure a hard test in this respect before her prayer was granted;⁵ and things were made difficult for the candidates for the apostleship; for, as a plain and indispensable condition, they had to accept absolute detachment from house and home, from flesh and blood.⁶ Even simple believers were required seriously to decide to lose life itself, if need be, or to give up being His disciples.⁷

¹ Matth. xxvi. 21, 23, 24; Luke xxii. 21; John xiii. 10, 18, 21.

² John xiii. 23-30.

³ Matth. xxvi. 49, 50.

⁴ Matth. ix. 28; xv. 28; Mark ix. 22; Luke xvii. 14; John iv. 50; xi. 6.

⁵ Matth. xv. 24, 26.

⁶ Luke ix. 57-62; Matth. xix. 21. ⁷ Luke ix. 23, &c.; xiv. 26.

Even where the best means of education are provided, a great deal depends upon the manner in which they are applied. They must be used continuously and indefatigably. The master must avail himself of every opportunity to instruct, improve and encourage. Here again our Saviour set us an incomparable example. He gave regular instructions and also made use of accidental occurrences, connecting His teaching and admonitions with them.¹ Another fact that may be noticed here is the way in which He frequently repeated the important points in His teaching. He often speaks of the practice of prayer,² the necessity of self-denial and of bearing the cross,³ and finally of love.⁴ Here again we recognise Him as a practical teacher. In imparting ordinary instruction repetition is the mother of knowledge, and far more so in the science of the saints.

A third point to notice, is that we must use the means of education with prudence and caution. Our Saviour did not overload His disciples, nor frustrate His own aims by excessive haste. His method was to teach little by little, and one thing at a time.⁵ He did not lay the same stress on everything, but on those matters which circumstances rendered important in each individual case. In speaking to the apostles He insisted particularly upon humility

¹ Luke xii. 13 ; xiii. 1 ; xiv. 7 ; xviii. 24.

² Luke xviii. 1 ; John xiv. 13 ; xv. 7, 16 ; xvi. 24.

³ Matth. x. 38 ; xvi. 24, 25 ; Mark viii. 34.

⁴ Luke x. 27 ; Matth. v. 44 ; xii. 7 ; John xiii. 34 ; xv. 12.

⁵ Luke v. 33-39.

and detachment, using emphatic and decisive language with regard to them. In His eyes the will and desires counted for much, and He proportioned His teaching and demands to them. We have a striking instance of this in the story of the rich young man. As long as he merely asked what was the way of salvation, our Lord referred him to the commandments ; it was only when he expressed a real desire for perfection, that He instructed him regarding the counsels.¹ He understood how to be long-suffering, and to overlook trifling offences for the sake of some greater good. Thus He allowed Nicodemus for some time not to declare himself openly as His follower for fear of the Jews.² This patience and consideration brought forth wonderful results.³

Our Saviour displayed this wise reserve and gradual development in revealing His divinity to the people, and in requiring them to believe in it ;⁴ whereas He made Himself known plainly to individuals. He acted similarly with regard to the announcement of His Passion, in the case both of the apostles and of the disciples in general. It was only in the third year of His public life, after the confession of St. Peter, that He revealed His approaching sufferings clearly to the apostles ; and He repeated this revelation still more plainly :⁵ although it was not until the

¹ Matth. xix. 16-21.

² John iii. 2 ; vii. 50, 51.

³ John xix. 39.

⁴ Mark ix. 8 ; Luke iv. 41 ; vii. 22 ; xxii. 70 ; John v. 18, &c. ; vi. 27, 47 ; vii. 28, &c. ; viii. 12, &c., 27, 55 ; x. 30 ; xi. 41, 42 ; Matth. xvi. 20.

⁵ John ii. 19 ; vii. 20, 34 ; viii. 28 ; Luke ix. 22 ; xviii. 31 ; Matth. xvii. 21.

Jews increased their persecution that He allowed them to perceive fully what was to come to pass.¹

These revelations were always accompanied by the suggestion of noble motives for suffering with Him joyfully and courageously.

At this point we may consider the example set us by our Saviour of dealing with and attracting the various classes of people who surrounded Him. It is both instructive and interesting for us. To the common people He generally addressed very simple, moral instructions universally applicable, as in the Sermon on the Mount,² speaking in a very plain and intelligible though ingenious way, and making constant use of parables and similes.³

He sought to win over His hearers by showing a generous sympathy with them, by kindness, patience, condescension and readiness to help them in all their troubles and necessities, not excepting those of the body.⁴

We can see how he treated the ruling classes from the miracle wrought on the centurion's servant,⁵ and from the raising of the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue.⁶

He did not seek to gain admission to rich men's houses,⁷ but allowed them to come to Him and invite Him.⁸ When invited, however, He was ready to visit them;⁹ and having once obtained a hold over them,

¹ Luke ix. 5, 23, 44; x. 10; xii. 4, 49; xxii. 36; John xv. 18-27; xvi. 1-12.

² Matth. v.-vii.

³ Matth. xiv. 14, &c.; xv. 32, &c.

⁴ Mark v. 36.

⁵ Mark v. 23.

⁶ Matth. xiii.

⁷ Matth. viii. 5.

⁸ Luke vii. 10; xxiii. 8.

⁹ Mark v. 24.

He did not easily relax it.¹ He overlooked their want of courtesy,² treated them with the utmost forbearance and tenderest consideration,³ and expected from them no particular gratitude.⁴

Our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus shows us how He acted with regard to learned men. Nicodemus was a famous scholar, steeped in Jewish prejudices ; but Christ won him over, and welcomed him kindly, although Nicodemus came to Him only by night.⁵ He gently corrected his mistaken ideas on the subject of the means of securing salvation and of the object with which the Messiah was to come ; and let him perceive His superiority to himself and his school, praising him modestly, and saying that still more might be expected from a man of such uprightness.⁶ Finally He gave him His full confidence, revealed to him the deepest mysteries of Christianity and showed Himself as the Son of God.⁷

The learned man departed, full of faith, gratitude and devotion to his master ; and later on his actions justified our Saviour's expectations. The educated classes were particularly slow and obstinate in believing ; but our Lord met them with infinite gentleness and kindness, and had always a wise answer to give in reply to their crafty and malicious questions. In their presence He uttered discourses of a deeply doctrinal character ;⁸ in argument He put their cunning to

¹ Mark v. 36.

² Mark v. 40.

³ Mark v. 37, 43.

⁴ Mark v. 42.

⁵ John iii. 2.

⁶ John iii. 21.

⁷ John iii. 13-17.

⁸ John v. 17, &c. ; vi. ; vii. 16, &c.

shame by His greater wisdom and ready wit ;¹ and finally, when nothing else availed, He laid bare their wickedness before the eyes of the people.²

In the story of the Samaritan woman we see how He contrived to win over sinners and souls that had gone astray. She was leading a careless, frivolous life, but was not wholly bad or irreligious ; she was frank and outspoken, almost witty, and not devoid of curiosity.³

How did our Lord treat her ? With great knowledge of human nature, refinement and delicacy. He addressed her, and, contrary to the custom of the Jews, asked her for a drink of water.⁴ He stimulated her curiosity by mysterious remarks about Himself and the gift of living water.⁵ As the woman either could not or would not understand Him, and almost turned the matter into a joke, He astonished her by revealing to her the state of her conscience ;⁶ and when she was softened, He won her heart completely by the moderation and fairness with which, though He conceded nothing of the truth, He surveyed and judged the chief point in dispute between the Jews and Samaritans, and finally declared plainly that He was the Messiah.⁷

We can trace the steps by which He gradually drew her to Himself. At first she called Him a " Jew," then " Sir," then " a prophet," and at last " Christ." ⁸

Thus she was won over, and all Sichem with and

¹ John viii. 1-11 ; Matth. xxii.

² John iv.

³ John iv. 10, 13, 14.

⁴ John iv. 21-26.

⁵ Matth. xxiii.

⁶ John iv. 7-9.

⁷ John iv. 18.

⁸ John iv. 9 11, 19, 29.

through her. He was all goodness and kindness towards sinners, not only admitting them to His presence,¹ but going in search of them.² For them He had the most encouraging words and the most touching parables.³ He knew how to disentangle quickly and gently the confusion in their consciences, as we have seen in the case of the Samaritan woman ; and when they surrendered themselves to Him, He consoled them in a few soothing words ;⁴ they were free to enjoy His fervent friendship, and He defended them stoutly against all who attacked or despised them.⁵

We can follow our Saviour's method of education most clearly and instructively in His training of the Apostles. It was of the utmost importance to prepare them well for their high office, and He did this with care, wisdom and skill. They had to be equipped with a firm and intelligent grasp of His doctrines on faith and morals. This constituted their interior preparation ; and it was provided in the doctrinal discourses, which they were always required to hear.⁶ But He supplemented this teaching by introducing the apostles more profoundly into the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.⁷

In this course of instruction He advanced gradually to the discourse at the Last Supper, the climax of His revelation ;⁸ for He left much to the illuminating action of the Holy Ghost.⁹

¹ Luke v. 30.

² John v. 6.

³ Luke xv.

⁴ John v. 14 ; viii. 11 ; Luke vii. 50.

⁵ Luke vii. 40-50.

⁶ Matth. v. 1 ; Luke xvi. 1 ; Mark iii. 14.

⁷ Matth. xiii. 18, &c. ; xv. 10, 15 ; xvii. 18.

⁸ John xiv.-xvii.

⁹ John xvi. 12, 13.

With regard to the work, aim and means of the apostles' vocation, He taught them and the disciples particularly in the twofold pastoral instructions, when He equipped them with knowledge and power.¹ Especially beautiful were the frequent lessons on the nature and duties of their office as rulers of the Church.²

This interior training was not merely theoretical, but also practical. Our Lord noticed the undisciplined inclinations of the apostles, and checked them at once—their ambition, their envy and want of generosity, their tendency to vengeance and oversusceptibility.³

He strove to implant in them truly apostolic virtues, and particularly to make them ready to defend their faith. He gave them many opportunities of doing this;⁴ and He armed them against all the interior and exterior difficulties of their vocation by working miracles, especially what are known as the lake-miracles, that were intended solely for the apostles.⁵

Other apostolic virtues, in which he trained the disciples, were absolute detachment from temporal goods and from the ties of kinship,⁶ industry,⁷ vigilance,⁸ deprivation of outward comfort,⁹ patience and joy in time of persecution.¹⁰

¹ Luke ix. 1, &c. ; x. 1, &c. ² Matth. xx. 25 ; Luke xxii. 25.

³ Mark ix. 32 ; Matth. xx. 24 ; Luke ix. 50, 55.

⁴ Matth. xiv. 16, 27 ; xv. 32 ; xvi. 6, 15 ; xvii. 24 ; John vi. 68 ; Luke viii. 25.

⁵ Luke v. 8 ; Matth. viii. 24 ; xiv. 24.

⁶ Luke xiv. 26.

⁷ Matth. vii. 18 ; Mark iv. 35 ; vi. 31, 45 ; viii. 19 ; Luke ix. 14.

⁸ Luke xii. 42, 43.

⁹ Luke xii. 33 ; Matth. xii. 1.

¹⁰ Matth. x. 16.

The exterior training given to the apostles and disciples consisted in their being sent again and again to practise their work,¹ though our Lord showed great caution and consideration for them while beginners.² On their return He heard all that they had done, and spoke encouragingly of their success.³ When working miracles, He employed the apostles to arrange the people,⁴ and missed no opportunity of giving them a practical reminder of their intermediate position between Him and other men.⁵

Incidentally our Saviour provided for their bodily needs with a father's care,⁶ and defended them against the attacks of the Pharisees.⁷

It was natural that great reverence and love for their calling should be awakened in the apostles ; and our Lord did His best to encourage these feelings.⁸ Love of their vocation was to be the foundation of their work.

In training the apostles our Saviour treated each according to his individual character and disposition, thus showing His accurate knowledge of men. He displayed this knowledge when He called many of them to follow him. He approached John with friendly cordiality, for he was particularly susceptible to friendship and love.⁹

Philip seems to have been a man of very gentle,

¹ Luke ix. 52 ; x. 1. ² Matth. x. 5 ; Mark vi. 7 ; Luke x. 1.

³ Mark vi. 30 ; Luke x. 17, &c. ⁴ Mark vi. 39.

⁵ Mark viii. 1, 2 ; John vi. 5.

⁶ Luke x. 7 ; xxii. 35.

⁷ Mark ii. 16.

⁸ Matth. v. 13, 14 ; Luke x. 20-24 ; Mark iv. 21-25.

⁹ John i. 39.

docile disposition, who needed but a word and a sign to become His follower.¹ The same was the case with Matthew.² Nathanael, an educated, independent man, seeking straightforwardly after truth, was impressed by our Lord's calling him by name and disclosing the secrets of his conscience.³ Peter, the resolute, energetic and stout-hearted Galilean, was attracted by the prospect of a mysterious but glorious future.⁴

It is peculiarly instructive to observe in the case of Peter how our Lord brought his impetuous and self-confident disposition to the right degree of Christian humility by encouragement,⁵ by gentle and sharp rebukes,⁶ by serious warnings,⁷ and by allowing him to make mistakes.⁸

As a result of this wise, gentle and vigorous training, St. Peter developed into a zealous and humble Pope, firm in the faith.⁹

3

We have been considering some conspicuous features in our divine Saviour's method of education, and we learn from them God's way of training men. His system could not fail to be successful, and all who submitted to our Lord's schooling did credit to His wisdom in education. From sinners they became honest men, from honest men saints, instruments in the

¹ John i. 43.

² John i. 47, 48, 49.

³ Luke v. 10.

⁴ Luke xxii. 34, 46.

⁵ John xxi. 15, 18.

⁶ Matth. ix. 9.

⁷ John i. 42.

⁸ Matth. xvii. 24 ; xvi. 23.

⁹ Matth. xiv. 31 ; Luke xxii. 55-61.

hands of God for doing great things for His honour and the salvation of mankind. The more unreservedly and generously they gave themselves up to His training, the more abundant were its results. We see this in the case of Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Lazarus, and especially with the Apostles. What and where were they when our Lord found them, and what did they become through His training? The results of it were not limited to them alone, or to the early Christians. He has been in every age employed in educating and training all mankind. All who after His appearance on earth have ever accepted His doctrines, all Christians, of every nation and in every century, have passed through His school, and have been trained by Him,—externally by His love, His commandments and His sacraments, under the protection of the Church, and internally by His grace. He begins and accomplishes His work of education anew in every human soul; and, wherever he finds submission, He displays His skill in training. All the saints are so many witnesses to the truth that Christ is the end, author, finisher and model of every form of Christian education.¹ In the history of our divine Saviour's method of education we must however record also instances of want of successful results, or what is generally called failure;—failure in the case of the majority of the nation, the salvation of which was His primary object;—failure in the case of mankind and Christians in general;—failure amongst His most intimate associates, even in the circle of the

¹ John xiv. 6; Gal. iv. 19; Rom. viii. 29.

apostles, one of whom became the instrument of His death and a son of perdition;—failure, at least partial, in the soul of every Christian and human being. What human existence is there that is not more or less spoilt and made gloomy by the shadow of the failures caused by its own fault? This is a sad but undeniable fact. Man is free, and God does not force him to do anything; but the very existence of human freedom brings with it inevitably the possibility of an abuse of this freedom. Man is weak, and, in virtue of his position as a created being, he contains in himself the germ of decay. Temptations and snares beset him, from within and from without; and it would be almost a miracle if, in his weakness, he did not succumb. Moreover his probation was not to consist of one act, as did that of the angels. Man's education and probation continue throughout his life, and God never ceases to train him. Contrary to all our expectations, God is able at the end to direct all for our good; and if finally man attains his eternal goal, his education has been successful. God prefers to permit evil rather than to deprive us of our freedom; and it is well for us to realise this.

One practical conclusion to be drawn from all that has been said, is that it behoves every man to recognise Christ's office as teacher and to submit himself to Him. We are all His scholars and pupils,¹ and His process of education is a gracious and yet majestic completion and application of His functions as prophet, shepherd and priest, brought to bear upon each individual soul. When our Lord

¹ John vi, 45.

after His resurrection appeared in His glorified body to Mary Magdalene, and she fell at His feet in transports of wonder and love, she had but the one word, "Rabboni," Master, in which to express all that filled her heart and mind.¹

In that one word, however, was contained all that she knew of Jesus and of herself, and all that she felt for Him. It summed up her whole relation to Him and His to her; it expressed her happiness and unspeakable joy. This word denotes the most beautiful and noble relation, that of a child to its teacher, with its accompanying feelings of respect, affectionate devotion and gratitude,—in short, the relation of every soul to Christ. As our master and instructor, He surrounds us and our whole lives with numberless tokens of His tender care. This work of education is the most impressive, gracious and beneficial result of Christ's dominion over and in us. Happy is he who surrenders himself to it without reserve!

Other conclusions are especially applicable to those engaged in education. They may rejoice in the honour and privilege of sharing in our Lord's own work. God could not entrust them with any higher or more important duty. Let them keep their eyes fixed on the example set them by Christ, and let them educate in accordance with His spirit and principles. In His method He has once for all sketched the outlines, and laid the foundation of the science of Christian education; and it is the model for all good training. Any

¹ John xx. 16.

departure from it leads to unhappy mistakes and to the evil consequences of bad education. Without Christ, education is nothing but oppression or confusion. It trains men to idolize themselves and to think only of this world ; not to be the blessings, but the scourges of mankind. The truth of this statement appears wherever men abandon the rules and principles of sound Christian education, but especially when violence is used to interfere with the legitimate rights of education, and when recourse is had to means that, according to natural and divine law, are either not concerned with education, or are so only incidentally. What beneficial results can follow if the state attempts to use a truncheon to arrange the delicate fabric of education, or if a godless government tries to explain the Christian catechism? God's laws and works are perfect ; but what do they become when the passions and ignorance of men lay violent hands upon them ?

Even in cases of failure, a glance at our divine Saviour brings us comfort and help. It is a source of deep sorrow to many parents, priests and teachers, when they see the fruits of a long, careful and laborious education apparently all thrown away. Why this should be is a painful and almost unfathomable mystery, and yet the same grief fell also to the lot of our divine Saviour. Who could educate as He did? Who has ever been more careful in giving instruction, in setting a good example and in praying constantly? Nevertheless much was wasted owing to the fickleness, passions and wickedness of the multitude. Who has ever incurred more un-

popularity in the work of education? It went to our Lord's heart, and forced from Him bitter tears and sighs.¹ If He did not always succeed, what reason have we, poor creatures, to complain? But, in the end, all that God does is successful; and who knows whether this cross may not prove to be the most efficacious of all His means of education, and finally turn the scale in our favour in His sight? God must know best.

¹ Luke xix. 41.

III.

OUR SAVIOUR IN HIS INTERCOURSE WITH MANKIND.

AT Easter, when He rose again from the dead, our Lord withdrew from ordinary human life ; and at His ascension He departed altogether from this world ; but at Corpus Christi He came back to us and took possession again of the earth, never to leave it during the rest of the ecclesiastical year. Thenceforth in the Sunday gospels the Church shows us our Lord in all the events of His public life, in His loving pity for sinners, in His dealings with the people, whom He taught by words and miracles, and, when the time of harvest comes round, we have the beautiful parables of the fruitful and unfruitful tree, and of the unjust steward, to teach us to make good use of the gifts bestowed upon us. In a word, we have our Lord's public life presented without interruption to our eyes.

It seems therefore quite in keeping with Christian devotion to draw a comprehensive picture of Him in His intercourse with men.

It is always interesting and instructive to observe and study any great man in his dealings with people. What his great political speeches and actions

do not tell us, is revealed most certainly in his daily intercourse ; and it is far more true to say of this intercourse than of his manner of writing that it is the man himself. In fact the informal, constant contact with people of all types is the most trustworthy and truest revelation of a man's real nature and disposition. Experienced portrait painters do not paint anyone sitting formally for his likeness, but talking familiarly with his friends, for then a man shows himself as he is, and does not pretend to be anything else.

All this is true in an incomparably greater degree of our Lord and Saviour. Our interest increases tenfold when we consider who He is, and what relation He bears to us, to the human race in general, and to the whole world. When God appears in the form of man, it must be interesting and important to study how He behaves in His intercourse with His creatures. Artists, philosophers and thinkers have always tried to represent Him with His contemporaries, and in the gospel we have the best and truest pictures of this intercourse. There He is really God, as He described and represented Himself to all men, and especially to us Christians, for whom His example was to be not only a model, but to some extent also a law. This subject forms a very important part of the whole history of His public life, and it is very suitably and conveniently divided by theologians into three sections, viz., Our Saviour's teaching, His miracles, and the example of His goodness displayed in His dealings with men.¹

¹ St. Thom. 3, q. 40.

The present sketches are concerned with this part of our Lord's life. To assist us in forming a clear, definite and intelligible idea of the picture presented to us, the following sequence of thoughts may be of service: Our Saviour had intercourse with men; He had it in a perfect manner worthy of God. Some conclusions will naturally be deduced from what is said.

I.

Our Saviour had intercourse with men.

Our Lord never devoted Himself exclusively to the contemplative life. From time to time, for the purpose of taking bodily rest or in order to pray, He went for short periods into the wilderness and avoided human intercourse. He did this at the beginning of His public life for 40 days, and on several subsequent occasions; but otherwise He lived in the world, in constant intercourse with men. He came into the world at a time of universal excitement, when the general assessment, which He Himself had really ordered, was being made throughout the Empire. Families roused themselves and travelled along the country roads to come and give evidence of their existence, that had been long forgotten. With them our Lord too came to the city of David, His ancestor; and no sooner was He born than Roman couriers carried His name to Rome, and deposited it, the name of the heir of the Empire and future Lord of the world, in the Capitol, the centre of the government. The green hills of Nazareth long kept faithful watch over the home of His childhood and early man-

hood, so that, at the beginning of His public life, nothing was known of Him, save that He was son of Joseph and Mary, and was a carpenter.¹

Thus He lived in the little mountain village in daily intercourse with His neighbours. Possibly He was known there as an unusually pious, industrious and friendly boy, youth and man, the best of the young men, the object of respect and honour to the rough people of Nazareth, and the envy of many mothers less happy than His own. His life at Nazareth is hidden, and yet its being thus hidden, only deepens and intensifies its importance for mankind. When Christ became man, He passed over the angels, and chose to clothe Himself in human nature, thus laying a deeper hold upon His creation, coming lower down and striking deeper root to draw it to Himself. In the sacrament of the altar, He retains the material forms of bread and wine, and incorporates them into His eucharistic nature, devising a new form of creation and uniting it with Himself. In the same way, His unnoticed residence in the little mountain village, and His descending to the lowest classes and occupations among the people, formed the foundation of a greater intimacy with men, and of a power to reach and influence classes which even His public life did not touch. Through His life of labour and obedience He became the model and companion of by far the majority of mankind. In His obscurity He became truly God and Redeemer.²

It was, however, when our Lord came forward openly as a teacher and prophet that His intercourse

¹ Mark vi. 3.

² Is. xlv. 15.

with men reached its highest point. There was at that time no name better known throughout the country than that of Jesus of Nazareth. He might be seen and met everywhere. Every child in Israel knew Him. There was no class of people with which He did not come into contact, and in which He did not arouse feelings either of love and reverence, or of repugnance, hatred and hostility. He came into the world in quiet Bethlehem, in the darkness and silence of midnight, but He died in Jerusalem publicly, at the Pasch, high on the Cross, a victim of the furious vengeance of His powerful enemies, of the fickleness of His infatuated nation, and of the cowardice and injustice of His judge. He was really a victim to the publicity in which He had lived.¹

As chief and elder of a quiet community of Essenes, living far from the world under the peaceful and stately palm trees near the Dead Sea, He would never have suffered from the violence of envy and hatred. But our Saviour was always in the world, closely associated with men; and it was to some extent inevitable that this should be the case, for the work of His life necessitated it. As the greatest teacher and prophet of God, He had to preach the truth in the world, and especially the truth that He Himself was God. As law-giver, He had to make known His law as the new way to heaven. As mediator, He had to inaugurate the new covenant. And as priest and king He had to organise and establish the new Kingdom of God. He had to do all this, not by means of others, but alone; not by written docu-

¹ John vii. 6, 7.

ments, but by word of mouth and by miracles, just as of old God had Himself given the law to the people, and had spoken face to face with Moses, and had made the covenant. Above all things it behoved our Lord by the sanctity of His life to give mankind a living illustration of the perfection and dignity of His moral law, not only of ordinary individual perfection, but of the state of perfection. In laying down His laws with reference to perfection, Christ provided for various states, one of which surpasses the others in perfection. Of the various states, the contemplative, which is especially concerned with God and the consideration of truth, is better than the purely active, which aims only at giving bodily help to one's neighbour. But far higher than either is the active life that devotes itself to the spiritual welfare of one's neighbour, because in its very nature it implies the fulness of the contemplation and of the love which it is to bestow upon that neighbour.¹

Our Saviour had to set an example of this exalted and perfect virtue in order to induce men to aim at it in proportion to their grace and good will. For this reason He ordered His life so as to be plainly our example, no matter what our position or circumstances may be. He lived surrounded by human beings, and made human life in its various forms and developments His own.

In this way He secured an advantage, without which He would probably not have been able to attain His end at all with us, or would have attained it only with difficulty—the advantage of winning

¹ St. Thom. 2, 2, q. 182, a. 1 ; q. 188, a. 6.

affection and confidence, which have so much influence over the hearts of men. They are most easily won by those who approach them in a friendly manner and willingly adapt themselves to the social customs of human life. A man approached in this way feels that he is respected and loved ; and he has no difficulty in showing friendliness and love in return. For this reason our Saviour shunned and despised nothing connected with human life,—sin and evil alone excepted. He did not hesitate to take part in everything ; and, even to the annoyance and indignation of His critical enemies and persecutors,¹ He conformed to all the innocent customs of the time, the country and the nation.

This is a beautiful and touching feature in the character and religion of Christ, which distinguishes Him from all others. John the Baptist appeared immediately before Him, but in a very different way. He, too, was a prophet, the greatest of all, and his word and example had very great influence in Israel, but in his youth no one beheld him except the wild beasts in the wilderness. Even when the word of the Lord came to him he did not enter the dwelling-places of men. He was still the voice of one crying in the wilderness,² and drew people out to him by his powerful call to penance. They found in him a new Elias,³ with all the severity and rigour of the prophets of old ; and they looked up to him as to some super-human being, who did not eat and drink with them. Our Saviour pointed out this difference between

¹ John ii. 2 ; Matth. ix. 11. ² Matth. iii. 3.

³ John i. 21.

Himself and John,¹ and rightly, for John was merely the herald, not the Messiah; merely the friend of the bridegroom, not the bridegroom Himself; the angel of God's countenance, not God Himself; and so he did not feel the need of coming closely into contact with men. But the Bridegroom came in the grace and beauty of His form, with His lips pouring forth sweetness and His brow anointed with the oil of gladness, wooing the bride's heart with gentle voice. He was the good Samaritan and the tender physician of souls, and did not shrink from the pestilential paths of vice and the foul haunts of human misery. The physician comes not for the healthy but for the sick. Jesus came our God, our Friend and the Ruler of life, who hated none of the things that He had created, and spared everything, because it was His own.² He came to seek what was lost, and to bring back what had gone astray. In the Old Testament, eternal wisdom, the friend of men, is described as uttering her voice in the streets, as putting forth her voice in the top of the highest places, in the midst of the paths, beside the gates of the city, and saying: "Whosoever is a little one let him come to me. Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you."³

Our Saviour fulfilled this prophecy most perfectly. The wisdom of the Stoics was something absolutely different from that of the God-man. They were unsociable, living in unapproachable solitude, raised so far above the common herd as never to honour

¹ Matth. xi. 18, &c.

² Wisdom xi. 25, &c.

³ Prov. i. 20 ; viii. 1, &c. ; ix. 4, &c.

them with a glance. But our God did not act thus. "He was seen upon earth and conversed with men":¹ yes, "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us."² Our God is one who is the friend of men and associates with them.

2.

It was then our Saviour's way of performing His task, to lead a social life and to be in constant intercourse with the world. This intercourse was, as it could not fail to be, most perfect in the highest sense of the word; for it had three particular qualities.

The first and most necessary quality of Christ's intercourse with men was its power to edify. His influence was to stimulate others in every respect to lead moral and good lives. A man's life will be edifying if it conforms to the highest law of morality in every way, and admits no shadow of suspicion of disorderly self-seeking.

The most absolute rule and the highest law of moral action is the will of God; and to observe this law fully, and conform to it in all things, constitutes perfect sanctity in a creature. In our Saviour's life among men we see practical illustration of this in a special and surprising way. We find so many strange features in it, as described by the evangelists, that we cannot give any natural explanation of them. We may ask why, if the greatest possible publicity was desirable for our Saviour and His work, He

¹ Baruch iii. 38.

² John i. 14.

spent by far the greatest part of His life in the absolute seclusion of the quiet little town of Nazareth, following a trade that never yet made anyone famous? Why did He not live at Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish world, in contact with the upper classes of the people, and holding some honourable and influential office? Why did He begin His work of teaching so late? Why did He so plainly prefer Galilee, a district of less importance, as the scene of His preaching, activity and miracles? Why did He choose the little country of Palestine at all, and not Greece or Rome, where He would have met men from every country of the known world? His noble and generous heart, full of zeal for souls and love of men, would naturally have sought a wider sphere, especially as He found among His own nation so little welcome and so much obstinate opposition, which, humanly speaking, thwarted Him in His work. And He never officially set foot beyond the narrow boundaries of His native land.

Why in the narrow sphere of His activity did He choose such insignificant men to be apostles? Why did He wander restlessly from place to place, and why did He work miracles apparently designed to annoy and offend His enemies?¹ Why did He associate with disreputable and abandoned people? These are all mysteries, for which no solution can be offered, unless we refer them to the Will of God, which determined this wonderful life, and directed it from beginning to end. Viewed from the aspect of this higher, divine

¹ John ix. 16 ; Luke xiii. 14.

Will, all becomes clear, good, holy and edifying. Our Saviour Himself frequently spoke of this mysterious and divine Will directing His life, and justified thus the apparent contradictions in His actions. To do the will of God was His task, His life-work, His food, His consolation, the highest law¹ governing His actions and guiding His steps, both in great and little things. He undertook no journey, no preaching, no conversation, unless under the direction of His heavenly Father's will. He rejected none sent Him by His Father :² not Nicodemus, not the Samaritan woman, not even Judas who was to betray Him.

This direct reference to the Will of God and this perfect submission to it form the true, interior substance, and the real power to edify, in our Saviour's intercourse with men. Without this higher character the greatest and noblest life and work, those of the God-man not excepted, would be devoid of value from the moral point of view, and would be nothing but a great delusion and brilliant disorder. We ourselves fully approve only of what stands the tests of duty, conscience and the unerring judgment of God. A man is what he is in God's sight ; and a human life is worth what it weighs in His balance.

"I do always the things that please Him."³ This is our Lord's glorious justification of all His actions, and this explains the power to edify which His life had and still has upon all men.

Another edifying feature in our Saviour's life, con-

¹ John iv. 34 ; v. 30 ; vi. 38 ; viii. 29 ; Matth. xi. 26.

² John vi. 37.

³ John viii. 29.

nected with the one which we have been considering, is that He often interrupted His activity for a time in order to devote Himself to prayer and intercourse with God.¹

He was inwardly always united with God, and, in virtue of the hypostatic union and the unbroken contemplation of God, He was always engaged in prayer. No one desired more ardently to glorify God by apostolic work amongst men. But He did not therefore feel Himself relieved of the duty of seeking God in prayer; in fact He would have deemed it unseemly to neglect God because of intercourse with men. Our Saviour acted thus in order to discharge the duty of prayer, which was incumbent upon Him also as God-man, and in order in this way to work for us with God:—for prayer is a powerful means of salvation, and Christ was to redeem us not only by His labour and suffering, but also by praying for us as our mediator,—and, thirdly, in order to be an example to us, and to give us a warning. We are not rich enough in ourselves to be able to endure uninterrupted intercourse with men without suffering any harm from it, nor can we dispense with the help of prayer. A watering-can has but one small opening to take in water, and a rose with a hundred holes to let it out. If our spiritual state resembles this, we have not much prospect of its prospering, and we must seek help in prayer. When we work for our neighbours we give out, but we receive when we pray. If the world did not see us pray it would scarcely believe that we seek God or

¹ Luke vi. 12 ; ix. 18.

the welfare of our fellow men when we associate with them, but would be more apt to believe that we had ourselves and our own advantage in view. Would this have an edifying effect?

Another no less noble and edifying quality displayed by our Lord in associating with men was His absolute straightforwardness and honesty. Neither in His words nor actions, nor in any of His dealings with those in contact with Him, was there anything ambiguous or false, anything diplomatic or political. He said what He thought and felt openly and fearlessly, and none of His words had a double signification. He loved all genuinely, had no selfish aims, and tried to win men to Himself to do them good, but not by any crooked paths. He did not treat people as mere tools, and was never careful to reserve a way of escape for Himself. He explained to all quite frankly what they had to expect from Him, and He kept nothing back, not even what would distress them.¹ When a rebuke was deserved, He gave it without hesitation; and He required of others only what He Himself did and accomplished, though in a lesser degree.²

It was precisely His frankness that made Him the relentless opponent of the cunning, hypocritical and deceitful Pharisees. He could be terrible in His outspokenness towards these transgressors against truth and honesty.³ His frankness brought him at last to the cross. It is a strange fact that this virtue, so

¹ Luke ix. 58; xii. 51; Matth. x. 21; John xvi. 2.

² Luke ix. 23; xiv. 26; Matth. x. 24; John xv. 20.

³ Matth. xxiii.; Luke xi. 42, &c.

beautiful, so honourable and so important in human intercourse, is often absent, quite apart from the falsehood and dishonesty of the world, even in otherwise sterling characters, striving most truly after what is good. This effect is due either to an unfortunate misunderstanding, or to some unconscious fault and twist in their disposition ; but in both cases it is an offence against the duties of social life. Our neighbours have a right to the truth, and do not like being used as mere tools, even for their own advantage. Diplomatic saints may perhaps be saints, but they are not so in our Saviour's way ; and if they fail to win the confidence of those about them, they are bound to ascribe their failure to this unhappy defect in their own character.

The acquisition of this virtue requires all a man's courage, and demands absolute freedom from self-seeking.

The second great condition of edifying intercourse with men is true disinterestedness, and a conviction on the part of our fellow men that our actions are in no way motivated or directed by selfish considerations. What a grand example our Saviour has set us in this respect !

If He had chosen, in associating with men, He might have secured for Himself personal advantages, temporal possessions, all the pleasures of life and popular favour. And what did He obtain ? The facts speak plainly enough. What money or goods did His sermons earn for Him ? What did He make by His miracles and cures, which He might have wrought for payment ? Nothing, not a foot of land

on which to lay His head ; not money enough to pay the Temple tax.¹

It was His will to live and die poor, and to set us the most perfect example of apostolic poverty. For this reason He associated chiefly with poor, insignificant people, who could offer Him no temporal reward. He did not on principle exclude the rich from His society, but He allowed them to seek Him, without seeking them Himself ; and when they called Him to their aid, he accepted nothing from them except thanks, which were often given grudgingly enough.

He was equally poor in the more refined pleasures of social intercourse, and it is remarkable how little He had to do with women. He healed them, drove devils out of them, made use of them in furthering His kingdom, but He never flattered them in any way.²

In the instructions and precepts given to the apostles, He was stern, inexorable and almost hard, striking particularly at that love of house and home, of kith and kin, which encourages men's feelings of self-satisfaction and compensates them for all the hardships of their calling.³

He cut Himself off from His home and family. He had no desire to be carried on the wave of popular favour, as an idol of the nation, a prophet according to the taste of the people, or a partisan of the fashionable and influential classes. He was not

¹ Matth. xvii. 26.

² Luke x. 41 ; Mark vii. 27.

³ Luke ix. 59-62 ; xiv. 26-35.

the Messiah of their expectations, but a scandal to them,¹ a scourge to their national pride and an inexorable judge of their moral transgressions. He was the same with regard to everything to which self-love and self-interest can incline us,—*non sibi placuit*, in nothing did He seek His own pleasure. These are the expressive and stately words in which St. Paul sums up and describes his Master's whole way of life.²

He sought nothing of man, but man himself, not for His own sake, but for God's, and ultimately also for man's own good. This is the edifying and divine lesson taught by His life and intercourse with men, and it is infinitely important, especially for those called to labour for the salvation of souls.³

This disinterestedness produced freedom and security, force and vigour, and commands respect. Nothing has more power to edify and convince men than true unselfishness. Everything gives way before it. Its language is that of sacrifice and renunciation, and there is nothing more majestic and more capable of arousing veneration.

The second quality belonging to our Lord's perfect intercourse with mankind was its utility and benevolence. Benevolence is active charity towards one's neighbour, an endeavour to benefit him in body and soul, and to do good; it is mercy in the highest sense of the word.

No one's life and works have ever been more useful and beneficial to men than our Saviour's. He

¹ Luke vii. 23.

² Romans xv. 3.

³ St. Thom. 3, q. 40, a. 3.

did good to all who came near Him, and tried in every way to serve His neighbour. He taught His apostles and disciples, His friends and enemies, the willing and the unwilling, by word and deed, by precept and example. He healed all infirmities of body and soul, miraculously supplied every need, noticed even the most trivial embarrassments of life, and poured out the blessing of consolation in every kind of distress. In order to help and comfort, He made everything able to work miracles, His words, His hand, His spittle, even the hem of His garment.¹

Power went forth from Him to heal all diseases. But, in order to be a benefactor, He was a man of work—constant, laborious and exhausting work. Day and night found Him toiling to do good to men and make them happy ; and, that He might extend this work of making men happy to all nations in every age, He founded the Church, the great instrument of supplying happiness and salvation to the world ; instituted the sacraments and established the apostolic hierarchy, which, animated by His spirit, was to carry on His work of love. How beautifully did He reveal His intentions for the welfare of mankind in the pastoral instructions given to His apostles and disciples ! That they might do good to men, both in body and soul, He imparted to them all His own powers of benefiting them, even His miraculous gifts, and taught them that, if they could do nothing more, they should at least not refuse to wish peace to the houses which they entered.²

¹ Matth. viii. 3 ; xx. 34 ; John ix. 6 ; Matth. ix. 20.

² Matth. x. 12, &c. ; Luke x. 5.

This was the sole luxury which our Saviour allowed Himself here on earth—to work indefatigably for the welfare of mankind, using every means to this end. The nearer He drew to the close of His life, the more eager was He to add to this labour of love. “I must work the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work.”¹

Our Lord was not only outwardly patient and unwearied in doing good, but He acted with alacrity, courtesy and cheerful pleasure, even in circumstances which might naturally have embittered the task to Him.

How often was He obliged to repress the anger and indignation shown by the apostles at the importunity, rudeness and want of consideration displayed by those who sought His help!²

His good works were accomplished with true inward goodness of heart, not from any merely natural inclination and need, but in accordance with the noblest promptings of virtue. He did us an infinite amount of good, because He loved God, and mankind in God. He saw in us His own fellow creatures, His brethren, children of God in indescribable need of help ; and He was commissioned by His Father to make them happy. His good deeds were like a clear spring flowing from a heart full of love for God and man.

“He is a good man,”³—these are the words in which the people about Him expressed their feelings regarding Him. “He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed.”⁴

¹ John ix. 4.

² Matth. xix. 13.

³ John vii. 12.

⁴ Acts x. 38.

He acted like a farmer sowing his field, scattering the golden seed right and left from morning till evening, and fertilising the dead furrows with the blessing of life. From His hand works of mercy fell unnumbered upon the barren regions of the earth, until that hand rested motionless in death. The last commission: "Love one another as I have loved you;"¹ the noble and touching account of the work accomplished: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;"² and the last utterance of His dying lips: "It is consummated,"³ conclude His work of doing good. Thus the sun at the end of its course shines with greater light and brilliancy, and seems with the joy of a master to be surveying the day's work that it has promoted, and the blessings of comfort and life that it has lavished upon the earth and the children of men, until at last, satisfied and glorious, it sinks to rest amidst the evening clouds.

Would that we too could end our days with the consoling consciousness of leaving no one behind to whom we have done no good! So little is needed to enable us to do much good.

To say nothing of other qualifications, each of us has a good heart, kindly words, friendly looks, charitable thoughts and wishes. Are not these a rich store, providing us with constant means of doing good? They are enough to perform almost miracles of charity, and if they do not suffice, we can always have recourse to the wealth of prayer. The real obstacle to doing good is not poverty, but idleness, indifference and selfishness, dragging on an unconscious, aimless

¹ John xv. 12.

² John xvii. 4.

³ John xix. 30.

and useless existence, the burden and disgrace of which weigh upon no one more oppressively than upon the unhappy man who leads this life. Conscience has but one sting for a generous heart—it must depart from life without having done any real good.

The third quality in our Saviour's perfect intercourse with mankind was His loveliness.

We must first of all know what constitutes this quality ; for, like other virtues, it has a double in the world. A man is truly lovable who truly loves. Nothing is more lovable than love, and it alone calls forth love in return ; but it must be unselfish and charitable. Self-interest is a blight destructive of loveliness, which perishes at a single touch or revelation of selfishness. Love then is lovable, but not if it consists merely in wishing a man well interiorly (for then only God and the angels can take pleasure in it), but it must express itself and make itself known in looks, gestures, words and works. The outward manifestations of love are a respectful, friendly manner, hearty sympathy with one's neighbour's joys and sorrows, tender consideration and attention to his needs, and readiness and eagerness to supply them. A lovable person is alive to everything belonging to man, and adapted to his nature, understanding, imagination and disposition. He is patient with his neighbour's shortcomings, and modest and tactful in giving commands, praise and blame.

Whoever desires to be lovable must beware of giving way to distraction, whims and passions, which

are the ruin of social existence. This is roughly an account of what we mean by loveliness. Thus understood and practised it may be called the product, the perfume, of all the virtues, and its mastery over the hearts of men is assured.

Our Saviour was lovable in the most exalted and fullest meaning of the word. He was not a formal legislator, a pedantic schoolmaster, or a narrow-minded professional or business man. His doctrinal discourses show us best what an attractive nature He possessed, fit to win all hearts. His method of teaching does not merely reveal to us His noble spirit and profound wisdom, which makes use of the simple language of children, but also the riches of His heart and the liveliness of His imagination. The man speaking to us belongs to His own country, nation and age. Nothing escapes His eye, not the much loved beauty of His native land, the flowers of its fields, the life of the wild animals, the appearance of the sky, the customs, habits and needs of its people, the necessities of the time. He sees all, all appeal to His heart, and all find vivid appreciation in His words. Though conscious of and occupied with the dignity and urgency of His life-work, He had nevertheless time for everything, even for trifles. He did each thing as if He had nothing else to do, with loving patience and care. How sweet He was in His dealings with children!¹ How considerate towards the faults of others, even the most serious offences!² How well He knew how to wait and give time for good desires to ripen!³

¹ Luke xviii. 15, &c. ² John viii. 10. ³ Mark v. 36.

How ready He was to recognise goodness!¹ How quiet and gentle in reproof!² How modest in giving orders!³ None of our needs escaped His notice; and He included a request for our daily bread in the prayer that He taught us. His patience resisted all trials, though they were many and great, proceeding from every class of those around Him. On every side appeals were made to Him for help and for miracles, but His willingness to aid was never exhausted. He even offered His assistance modestly,⁴ and did not let it depend upon any gratitude or recognition on the part of the recipient. From those whom He cured and raised to life, He did not claim His rights as the Giver of Life, and with indescribable tenderness He restored them in health to their father and mother.⁵ He was grateful for the smallest kindness and least token of goodwill.⁶ Twice at least He shed tears of pure sympathy, and was not ashamed of them.⁷

His farewell discourse, in its incomparable beauty, is the best and most endearing evidence of the tenderness and sympathy of His human heart, accessible to all emotions and feelings. All our Lord's words and works were manifestations of the love concealed within His heart; but in this discourse love revealed itself and found utterance, and spoke in language never before heard. It is the farewell, the great, irrefutable document of love that pours itself

¹ Mark v. 34; Matth. viii. 10; xv. 28.

² John v. 14; xx. 27.

³ Luke v. 3.

⁴ Luke vii. 13.

⁵ Luke vii. 15; ix. 43.

⁶ Luke v. 4; Mark xiv. 9.

⁷ John xi. 35; Luke xix. 41.

forth, seeking other love in return, love uttering sweet words of consolation and promises, love disclosed in that magnificent prayer in which it reached its sublime climax.¹ If love calls forth love, who can deny that our Lord was beyond measure lovable ; for He loved His own, who were in the world, and loved them unto the end.²

3.

The deductions from what has been said are obvious. We have before us something to admire and love. As was pointed out at the beginning, intercourse with men affords the safest and most trustworthy evidence of the spirit of a man, of his inward disposition and virtues. In associating with men, Christ set us in all respects an example of the noblest and most perfect virtue displayed in the most lovable form. In fact, no one had ever been seen who was such a revelation of goodness as Jesus of Nazareth, so truly human and yet so unlike others, so far exalted above everything on earth. When we think of Him it seems unreasonable, even for the sake of comparison, to refer to the versatility and refinement of Greek society, and the strong, vigorous, imperious manners of the Romans. Only the purity, harmony and dignity of the first Adam in the splendour of his original sinlessness could be mentioned in this connection :—but everything in our Lord is quite different. Plato was right in saying that the type of virtue in all its beauty had not yet appeared to men. In Christ it was really present.

¹ John xv., xvi., xvii.

² John xiii. 1.

This combination and completion of all that is fair in virtue, under the outward form of an ordinary though pure, beneficent and lovable life on earth in the midst of men, is a proof, not only of our Lord's humanity, but of His true divinity. If God desired to appear in human form and to live amongst men, He must inevitably appear and live as our Saviour did, "full of grace and truth." The grace, goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared to all men :¹—it is thus that St. Paul gives us most truly, though very shortly, a complete description of Christ's manner of appearing on earth.

In a similar way a charming picture of eternal wisdom is unfolded to us. She does not only go about instructing men, but she goes after them, seeking them ; goes to meet them and sits on the threshold awaiting them. She is divine wisdom, the author and creator of the physical and moral order, training kings and guiding nations. She adopts man, her nursling, favourite and child, with friendly affection and with motherly love. She protects and trains him with infinite condescension and care.²

Our Saviour in His intercourse with men corresponded most perfectly with this description ; and this gives us the clue to a comprehension of His wonderful success. Undoubtedly His lofty spirit, His mighty eloquence, His amazing miracles, and the absolute harmony between His life and teaching, were very powerful aids in accomplishing His task, and sufficed to convince men. But in winning their

¹ Titus ii. 11 ; iii. 4.

² Wisdom vi. 13, &c. ; vii. 21, &c. ; x. 12, &c. ; Eccclus. xxiv.

devotion the loveliness of His character, the charm of His society and the goodness of His heart, had infinitely more influence. God knew well that our hearts are affected by what we see and perceive, and so He drew us "with the cords of Adam,"¹ and entangled us in the attractive bonds of His love and intercourse, which must needs win our hearts. We read that a glance from His holy and gentle eyes was enough to transform worldly men into apostles, sinners into saints, and opponents into friends.²

We have therefore something to admire and love, but we have also something to imitate. This was, according to the apostle, the intention with which He came :—"The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that . . . we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world."³

The sight of a good man, even of a beautiful work of art, has power to raise, improve and sanctify us. Here we have not only beauty of nature and art, but grace. This is the way to Heaven full of delight ; for He is the way, the truth and the life. What we have been sketching in faint outlines is only our Lord's intercourse with man, but what a series of virtues it has revealed to us : virtues which, if we possessed them, would really make us good, useful and holy people !

We are once for all in the world, and we are obliged to come in contact with human beings ; and by means of this intercourse we have to sanctify ourselves and win heaven. It would be impossible to

¹ Osee xi. 4.

² Mark ii. 14 ; Luke xxii. 61.

³ Titus ii. 11-12.

have a better example and education than our Lord's life among men. The schooling given by the world supplies only external training and discipline, based on no foundation of virtue. How low is its idea of amiability, though all desire the credit of being amiable! What are good manners, good breeding, honesty and disinterestedness according to the world's standard and views? Our Saviour's words are applicable here: "Unless your justice abound more . . . you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹

The school of Christ is the only one that can make men fit for heaven. It is intended for all, but especially for those who are Christ's representatives here on earth, who inherit His power, use His authority and continue His work, acting as His ambassadors to men;² and these are the priests of the Catholic Church. With a deep appreciation of his task, an ambassador has to represent his sovereign, not merely by delivering his message in words, but by the dignity of his appearance and life. In the case of the Catholic priest this necessity is the more imperative because it is his duty to convey God's message to the world, not by means of writing, but by the living word, by his own personal bearing and by the sanctity of his life. He must himself be the living word, the embodied gospel of God. If this is so, it follows that these great demands can be met only by a dignity uniting the human and divine, by a divine mode of life and action. This is precisely what is taught by Christ's intercourse with men; where the priest can learn

¹ Matth. v. 20.² 2 Cor. v. 20.

how to live and work ; in and through which he becomes truly "the good odour of Christ ;"¹ he becomes an apostle, for he preaches Christ and makes Him known ; he becomes an evangelist, for in his own dealings with men he depicts and represents Christ in a living way.

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 15.



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IV.

OUR LORD'S WISDOM IN SPEAKING AND TEACHING.

WISDOM in speech has always been regarded and extolled among men as a glorious and divine gift, a mark of unusual ability. Power of speech is the sceptre that sways men's hearts; it is the sword with which intellectual contests are fought and decided; it has become the instrument of conveying the highest blessing of salvation and of divine revelation to man. Wonderful stories are told of the successes obtained by men powerful in speech, announcing the word of God; but they all sink into insignificance in comparison with the blessed Master, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was mighty in word and work,¹ and went about the Promised Land teaching and preaching, and winning the hearts of men to God. He possessed all the qualifications of a true teacher. He was authorised to teach, and His knowledge consisted of all the treasures of the wisdom of God, whilst, in virtue of His human and divine nature, He had full right to dispense interior graces to His hearers. He was the teacher of teachers, God and man in one person; and success

¹ Luke xxiv. 19.

could not fail to attend Him. All the evangelists agree in ascribing great results to His preaching among the people.

These results were due, however, not only to the extraordinary supernatural means of instruction at our Lord's disposal, but also to His mere natural wisdom in speaking and teaching, which is the subject of this little essay.

We shall consider a rhetoric that is at once divine and human. This study is well adapted to bring our Saviour near to us, and to make us acquainted with the natural dignity and beauty of His spirit, as well as to fill us with admiration and love of His personality.

If any speech is to have lasting results, it is essential for the speaker to appeal to all the faculties of his hearers and employ them for his own ends. The subject, on behalf of which he pleads, must shine forth conspicuously, must win the favour and influence the wills of men. The orator must work upon the intellect of his audience by means of his own clear and noble thoughts. He must subdue their imagination and senses, and sway their will. All these are characteristic features of the wisdom of Christ displayed in His speaking and teaching.

I.

In giving instruction our Lord's intellect held powerful sway over the intelligence of His hearers principally by reason of four great qualities which it possessed.

The first of these qualities was clearness. The unusual brevity and decision with which He taught conduced greatly to this lucidity. So did the simplicity with which He stated and developed His thoughts and the truths He taught. In the case of the prophets, their mental powers often seem unequal to the magnitude of the revelations made them. They appear to struggle painfully to find expressions, and have recourse to everything in heaven and on earth in order to discover suitable similes and comparisons. But our Saviour's language is clear, transparent and easy, resembling water rising and flowing from a quiet spring. A certain touch of universality, characteristic of His method of teaching, also tended to make it clear. He was a teacher in Israel, yet not exclusively for Israel, but for all ages and for all mankind. His teaching on faith and morals was to be for all future times the foundation of all spiritual and moral doctrines; and therefore it must have been universal, as in reality we see that it is. He was a descendant of Abraham, a native of the Promised Land, a prophet in Israel; and the religion, country, nation, history and customs of Israel are reflected in His instructions, without however destroying this feature of universality. A comparison between them and any important passage from the prophets, or a fragment of rabbinical eloquence, confirms this statement completely. Our Lord was God and Man, and so His method of teaching and speaking represents the highest ideal of pure humanity.

The second quality of mind which our Saviour's

teaching revealed was depth and sublimity. We may refer here first to the many apt comparisons that He used, as when He compared the eye to the light, and called the spirit, intention and disposition the eye of the soul ;¹ to the profound play upon words in such phrases as: "Let the dead bury their dead,"² "Elias (John the Baptist) is already come";³ to the mysterious and suggestive use of the words "spirit," "breath" and "gift" to describe the Holy Ghost ;⁴ to the ingenious substitution of "sleep" for death,"⁵ and of "life" for "soul."⁶

But it is in the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel, containing our Lord's promise of the Holy Eucharist, that the depth and sublimity of His wisdom in speech is most gloriously revealed. He takes the word "bread," and develops the most wonderful doctrines regarding His own nature and life-work, His relation to mankind, and His future existence and power in the Blessed Sacrament. The same idea is always present, but there is the greatest variety, diversity and wealth in the truths stated.

To the same category belong other noble passages, which are really revelations, opening up to the mind a boundless store of mysteries. Such are the words with which our Lord received the disciples on their return: "I saw satan like lightning falling from heaven." . . . "I confess to thee, O Father . . . because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the

¹ Matth. vi. 22 ; Luke xi. 34.

² Luke ix. 60.

³ Matth. xvii. 12.

⁴ John iii. 8 ; iv. 10.

⁵ Matth. ix. 24 ; John xi. 11.

⁶ Matth. xvi. 25.

prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. . .”
“All things are delivered to me by my Father, and no one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son and to whom the Son will reveal him.”¹

These words are like flashes of light, revealing the whole mystery of predestination and its development from its beginning in eternity to the day of the Son of Man, and so on to the end of the world. The living issue and centre of this grand development is Christ, God and Man, the source of all natural and supernatural knowledge of God, and of all salvation.

In the same way our Lord's words to the people of Sichem, when they approached Him,² and later to the Gentiles who came to Him in the Temple, at the moment when he was quitting it for ever,³ afford us a most consoling prospect of the boundless harvest to be gathered by the Church among the Gentiles, and of the splendour of the Gentile Church itself.

As the opposition to Him increased, our Saviour proclaimed that He was come to cast fire on the earth, not to send peace, but the sword,⁴ foretelling the stormy future of Christianity, that must make its way in the world in spite of violence and bloodshed.

Many of these magnificent passages seem prophetic in character. In the parable of Dives and

¹ Luke x. 18, 21, 22.

² John iv. 35.

³ John xii. 24, 25, 26, 31, 32.

⁴ Luke xii. 49; Matth. x. 34.

Lazarus, the statement that the rich man's brethren would not repent even if Lazarus rose again from the dead,¹ may be regarded as a secret prophecy of the obstinate unbelief of the Jews, even when Lazarus was raised to life and Christ rose from the dead. The words, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,"² are a real prophecy of our Lord's violent death and of His resurrection.

With terrible accuracy He foretold the destruction of His nation, saying that its last state should be worse than its first.³

But, on the other hand, such words as, "I am the true vine,"⁴ "I am the light of the world,"⁵ "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink,"⁶ "I am the way, the truth and the life,"⁷ "I am the resurrection and the life,"⁸ could only have been uttered by the eternal and divine Wisdom. They are so many radiant suns, revealing and illuminating infinite spheres of life, truth, beauty and happiness. They are abysses and unfathomable depths, down which the eye can look, and the mind sink, without ever discovering all that they contain. God alone is able to grasp their full significance and extent.

The third quality of mind conspicuous in our Saviour's teaching is His acumen and quickness. How readily did He use otherwise unnoticed words of Holy Scripture to deduce from them the immortality of the soul and His own divinity!⁹ With

¹ Luke xvi. 31.

² John ii. 19.

³ Matth. xii. 45.

⁴ John xv. 1.

⁵ John viii. 12.

⁶ John vii. 37.

⁷ John xiv. 6.

⁸ John xi. 25.

⁹ Matth. xxii. 32, 43, 44.

what quiet dexterity did He avoid the traps laid for Him by His cunning and malicious enemies! One constant ground of dispute was observance of the Sabbath; and with many striking remarks He overthrew their exaggerated and mistaken regulations. On one occasion He referred to the most profound and solemn reason for the law enforcing the Sabbath observance, viz., to God's rest after creating the world, in memory of which the Sabbath was instituted; and He showed that God's glory was promoted, not by absolute inactivity, but rather by constant work for His honour, and for the salvation of men.¹ At another time He refuted His opponents by alluding to men recognised as saints in the Old Testament,² to the example of the priests in the Temple,³ and even to their own actions, since they performed the rite of circumcision and attended to their domestic animals on the Sabbath.⁴

There were however three great occasions on which the superiority and readiness of His intellect were particularly conspicuous.

The first was in the case of the woman taken in adultery. The priests, with the wicked intention of destroying our Lord, left the decision to Him, and He made use of this permission to decide the matter in a most wise and dignified manner, speaking with higher authority as the judge of all, accusers and accused alike, thus causing the dishonourable accusers to depart, filled with shame and fear.⁵

¹ John v. 17.

² Luke vi. 3, &c.

³ Matth. xii. 5.

⁴ Luke xiv. 5; Matth. xii. 12.

⁵ John viii. 7, 8.

The second occasion was after the second cleansing of the Temple, when, at the order of the Sanhedrim, our Lord was asked by what right and authority He drove intruders out of the holy place. He avoided the snare by asking in return whether John the Baptist had been commissioned by God or not. The Jews saw the snare laid for them, refused to answer, and withdrew with a lie on their lips, having nothing to say. Our Saviour's question was by no means idle and purposeless, but was most closely connected with the question raised by the Sanhedrim, and actually contained His answer to it, although He intended the Jews to give it themselves. If John's mission had been from God, they had only to remember what witness John had borne to Him, and they would need no further answer as to the authority by which He drove intruders from the Temple.¹

The third occasion was when the captious question regarding the tribute money was raised. Our Lord simply accepted the statements made by the Pharisees and Herodians themselves. By using the Roman coinage, they recognized the emperor's right to claim tribute as supreme ruler of the country. Therefore our Saviour said: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."²

This instance shows us that His skill in controversy and argument did not always display itself in triumphantly repelling His opponents; but He made use of their incessant malicious attacks to give actual

¹ Matth. xxi. 23-27.

² Matth. xxii. 15-21.

instruction, and to reveal great and important truths and principles for all times. Thus when reproached because He and His disciples did not adhere to the traditions of the ancients, He availed Himself of the opportunity to give a far-reaching lesson on the significance and value of outward observances and regulations.¹

The Pharisees and the disciples of St. John complained that He did not encourage His followers to fast and pray, but went with them to feasts ; and this complaint caused Him to lay down the true principles governing outward austerity of life.²

The frivolous point of conscience raised by the Sadducees for the purpose of tempting Him, led Him to give us some wonderful information regarding the nature of life in the world to come ;³ and the Pharisees' question about the bill of divorce served as an occasion for promulgating not only the law of the indissoluble character of marriage, but also the counsels of evangelical virginity.⁴

His was an exalted and divine method of argument, rich in results and blessings ; and, like the revelations of the Old Testament, His teaching acquired in this way a peculiarly real and living quality. God's revelations are always connected with facts, and so both the Old and the New Testaments are at the same time codes of law and historical books.

The fourth quality of mind displayed in our Lord's doctrinal discourses is richness and variety ; and these

¹ Matth. xv. 10, &c.

² Luke v. 34-39.

³ Luke xx. 34-38.

⁴ Matth. xix. 3-12.

are indeed magnificent. He made use of the same thoughts, similes and parables again and again, and yet they are hardly ever identical. There is something fresh each time. Sometimes the same comparison and simile are used, but with a different object. Sometimes we find a variety of similes employed for the same purpose ; and at other times, while the comparison and purpose are unchanged, the addition of fresh circumstances transforms the whole. A few examples will illustrate these three assertions.

The following parables, similes and aphorisms differ in their aim, though they otherwise resemble one another.

Our Lord speaks twice of the lost sheep, brought back by the shepherd to the fold, and twice of the lost drachma, sought for by the poor woman. In each case He wishes to give us an idea of God's great goodness and mercy towards sinners, but for different purposes. Once the greatness of God's mercy is to be a motive for refraining from giving scandal.¹ The second time His mercy is mentioned to encourage publicans to do penance, as well as to turn the stern Pharisees away from their severity towards these poor people, and to induce them to show them love and compassion, as our Saviour Himself did.²

We read in two places of the owner of a vineyard and the workers in it. In both places the vineyard denotes the place of the Jews in God's scheme of salvation, but the object and the circumstances are

¹ Matth. xviii. 7-14.

² Luke xv. 1-10

different. In the first parable the workers are simply day-labourers,¹ in the second they are tenants.²

The object of the first is to show God's absolute freedom of choice, without prejudice to His justice. The second foretells the taking away of their mission from the Jews and its transference to the Gentiles. In the first parable, reference is made to the Jews only indirectly, in so far as their envy and arrogance are typified by the discontent of the labourers who were the first to be called. In the second the reference to them is direct, both in their misuse of the mission entrusted to them, and their plans to kill our Saviour.

In the first parable there is no mention of final exclusion from salvation, for all the labourers receive their penny, but the exclusion is only from favours and privileges. In the second the Jews are threatened with destruction in this world and the next. Again our Saviour twice related the parable of the wedding feast, but each time with quite different objects and circumstances. The first time³ He intended to teach that it was not enough to have a desire for the bliss of Heaven, but it was necessary to conform to the conditions laid down, and accept the invitation to join the Church. The Jews would not do so, and therefore they could not be partakers of the everlasting joys of Heaven, whereas the despised publicans and Gentiles would accept it, and be admitted to the kingdom. In the second parable⁴ the reference is not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles called to take their place. They too must comply with the conditions of

¹ Matth. xx. 1-16.

² Matth. xxi. 33-41.

³ Luke xiv. 16-24.

⁴ Matth. xxii. 1-14.

admission to the kingdom of God, otherwise they will also be rejected, as was the guest who wore no wedding garment. Fresh details are added regarding the Jews ; in this parable they do not merely refuse the invitation brought them by the messengers, but they show a spirit of real hostility, kill the King's servants, and then have to atone for their sin by suffering the destruction of their city.

We find also in single sayings and similes the same variety of purposes combined with similarity in form. Thus "leaven," as typifying an influence affecting men's minds, is used sometimes in a bad,¹ sometimes in a good sense.² At one time "salt," in reference to the apostles, denotes their whole power and efficiency, derived from their possession of supernatural wisdom and sanctity.³ At another time, it is the force of absolute detachment and self-conquest.⁴ The "beam in one's eye" is in one place mentioned as a reason for not judging others.⁵ Elsewhere it is used to warn men not to come forward as teachers, professing to cure others of faults of which they themselves are guilty.⁶ The proverb : "The disciple is not above his master," on one occasion is used to encourage the disciples to bear their cross after their divine Master ;⁷ but on another to warn them not to follow false teachers, lest they too should fall into error.⁸ The saying : "There is not anything secret, that shall not be made manifest," serves in one place to encourage

¹ Luke xii. 1.

³ Matth. v. 13.

⁵ Matth. vii. 1, &c.

⁷ Matth. x. 24.

² Luke xiii. 21.

⁴ Luke xiv. 34.

⁶ Luke vi. 39, 42.

⁸ Luke vi. 40.

our Lord's followers to be bold in preaching and confessing His doctrines;¹ in another to warn them not to join the Pharisees, as their hypocrisy and wickedness will one day be revealed.² The "adversary" is now conscience accusing us,³ now our neighbour with whom we have not been reconciled in this life.⁴ At first sight there is a contradiction between "He that is not against you is for you," and "He that is not with me is against me"; but the opposition is only apparent. The first words apply to fellowship in the apostolic college,⁵ the second to membership to Christ's kingdom in general.⁶ The proverb: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again," is used in one case of punishment,⁷ in another of rewards of good deeds,⁸ and especially of apostolic labours.⁹ In all these instances the same simile and phraseology are used in different senses and for different purposes. But, on the other hand, our Saviour often discovered and employed very various similes for the same end. In order to convince the Pharisees of their misunderstanding about the Sabbath, He made use of many arguments derived from their private life, reminding them that they did not scruple to attend to their domestic animals on that day. The same idea is expressed again and again, but always under a fresh form. Now it is a sheep,¹⁰ now an ass or an ox,¹¹ that has to be

¹ Luke viii. 17.

³ Luke xii. 58.

⁵ Mark ix. 39.

⁷ Matth. vii. 2.

⁹ Mark iv. 24.

¹¹ Luke xiv. 5.

² Matth. x. 26 ; Luke xii. 2.

⁴ Matth. v. 25.

⁶ Matth. xii. 30.

⁸ Luke vi. 38.

¹⁰ Matth. xii. 11,

drawn out of a pit. Or the illustration is taken from the act of loosing an animal from its manger and leading it out to drink, which is analogous to the case of the deformed woman, bound by satan and released by our Saviour.¹

In speaking of the miraculous power of faith, our Lord says that it is possible for a tree to be uprooted,² or for a mountain to be lifted up and cast into the sea.³

Perseverance in prayer is taught in two parables. Once we are told of a man, whose pertinacity forces his friend to give him bread at midnight;⁴ at another time of a poor widow, whose importunity causes a judge to do her justice.⁵

Our Lord often compares the Pharisees with graves; in one place He calls them "sepulchres that appear not," so that men, walking over them, have no suspicion of contracting defilement.⁶ Elsewhere they are termed "whited sepulchres," outwardly beautiful but containing filth.⁷

In order to impress upon His followers the need of watchfulness, our Lord derives similes from a doorkeeper,⁸ a householder guarding his house from thieves,⁹ virgins waiting for the coming of the bridegroom,¹⁰ and a faithful steward, in readiness for his master.¹¹

Steady work as long as life lasts is enjoined upon

¹ Luke xiii. 15, 16.

² Luke xvii. 6.

³ Matth. xxi. 21; Mark xi. 11. ⁴ Luke xi. 5-8.

⁵ Luke xviii. 3-5.

⁶ Luke xi. 44.

⁷ Matth. xxiii. 27.

⁸ Luke xii 36

⁹ Matth. xxiv. 43.

¹⁰ Matth xxv. 1.

¹¹ Matth. xxiv. 45.

us in the two parables of the servants left in charge of their master's goods.¹

This last example shows us how our Saviour, using the same illustrations for the same purpose, yet contrives to give them a touch of novelty and variety by altering some of the circumstances. In one parable we have an ordinary wealthy man distributing his money to his servants, that they may put it out at usury; and rewarding them in proportion to their merits and zeal, but punishing the idler by ceasing to put confidence in him and by inflicting positive chastisement.²

In the other we see a nobleman entrusting his private property to his subordinates. He rewards the zealous officials according to their merits, giving them state appointments. He punishes the idle and insolent servant only by taking away the money entrusted to him, but those who will not accept him as their ruler are put to death.³

These quite new additions exactly correspond to the circumstances in which our Lord was at that time. He was on His last journey to Jerusalem, and friends and foes alike awaited the establishment of His kingdom, though with totally opposed feelings. The warning was addressed to both. His friends were not to indulge in vain hopes, for His temporal rule was not yet to begin, and they would do better to spend their time in good work. To His enemies, on the other hand, He now revealed Himself as King,

¹ Matth. xxv. 14; Luke xix. 12.

² Matth. xxv. 14-30.

³ Luke xix. 11-28.

and threatened them more plainly with the most severe chastisement.

In this way, by means of His wisdom in speaking and teaching, our Saviour revealed in all its beauty the depth, acumen and wealth of His wondrous intellect. In all truth might it be said of Him: "A greater than Solomon is here." ¹

To the abundance and variety of His similes and turns of speech we may well apply the words that He Himself uttered: "Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." ²

The treasure of His wisdom is inexhaustible, and through His omniscient spirit all, even what is old, acquires the charm of novelty.

2.

Our Saviour's teaching and instructions were all the outcome of His great and powerful mind. They did not only contain noble and far-reaching thoughts, but gave pleasure by their beautiful imagery, which may be compared to the spring foliage beginning to clothe the wintry branches. Christ did not content Himself with what was absolutely necessary, and did not address abstract ideas to the intellect, but went into details, gave descriptions and appealed to the imagination and senses. All His expressions are vivid and vigorous. Of course a mystical meaning cannot be assigned to every detail in His discourses,

¹ Matth. xii. 42.

² Matth. xiii. 52.

and critics are right in saying that many words here and there are merely ornaments of speech—a token that our Lord was not indifferent to beauty of language, which He secured particularly by the following means: He seldom uses general terms; if He is speaking of the animal world, He mentions an eagle,¹ a raven,² or a sparrow,³ a fox,⁴ or a scorpion.⁵

If He is referring to trees, shrubs and plants, He alludes to a mulberry⁶ or a fig tree,⁷ a grain of mustard seed,⁸ mint, anise or cummin,⁹ and cockle amongst the wheat.¹⁰

Intense pain is described as weeping and gnashing of teeth.¹¹

In speaking of money, He names the drachma or groat,¹² the mina or pound,¹³ and the talent.¹⁴

Worldly interests are depicted as pleasure in agriculture, in a happy family life and in rich possessions.¹⁵

He not unfrequently gives vivid little descriptions derived from the processes of nature and human existence. He speaks of the growth of seed,¹⁶ the crafty devices and behaviour of evil spirits,¹⁷ the recklessness of the world at the approach of the day of judgment.¹⁸

¹ Luke xvii. 37.

³ Luke xii. 6.

⁵ Luke xi. 12.

⁷ Luke xiii. 6.

⁹ Matth. xxiii. 23.

¹¹ Luke xiii. 28.

¹³ Luke xix. 13.

¹⁵ Luke xiv. 18, &c.

¹⁷ Luke xi. 21, &c.

² Luke xii. 24.

⁴ Matth. viii. 20.

⁶ Luke xvii. 6.

⁸ Matth. xiii. 31.

¹⁰ Matth. xiii. 25.

¹² Luke xv. 8.

¹⁴ Matth. xxv. 15.

¹⁶ Mark iv. 26, &c.

¹⁸ Luke xvii. 26, &c.; Matth. xxiv. 37, &c.

How apt is His comparison between the spirit of His contemporaries among His own nation and that of capricious children at play,¹ and how completely is Herod's character summed up in one word!²

With the same intention He often makes use of proverbs containing the wisdom of the people in a form appealing to their imagination.³

Still more often He has recourse to the nature around Him, to the life, customs and history of His people, in order to give picturesqueness to His words. He makes the ravens and lilies teach men to have confidence in God's providence.⁴

The little grain of mustard seed typifies the inward power and the outward development of the Church from its humble beginning;⁵ the unfruitful and accursed tree at the gate of Jerusalem announces the coming judgment upon the city;⁶ foxes and birds give us some idea of our Lord's poverty;⁷ the grain of wheat that decays, but produces fruit a hundredfold, represents the wonderful efficacy of His death;⁸ and the vine portrays our mystical union with Him.⁹

He brings before us historical pictures with various applications—Abiathar and David,¹⁰ the Queen of the South and Solomon,¹¹ the prophets Elias and Eliseus,¹²

¹ Matth. xi. 16, &c.

² Luke xiii. 32.

³ John iv. 37; Luke iv. 23, 24; v. 31, 39; Matth. xix. 24; xxiii. 24; xxvi. 52; Mark x. 25.

⁴ Luke xii. 24, 27.

⁵ Matth. xiii. 31.

⁶ Luke xiii. 6-9; Mark xi. 13, 14, 20, 21.

⁷ Luke ix. 58.

⁸ John xii. 24, 25.

⁹ John xv.

¹⁰ Mark ii. 25, &c.

¹¹ Matth. xii. 42.

¹² Luke iv. 25-27.

Moses and the brazen serpent,¹ the deluge and the destruction of Sodom.²

Historical events belonging to the period of His public ministry are also employed, such as the murder of the Galileans in the Temple, the accident at the tower of Siloe,³ and the rebuilding of the graves of the prophets.⁴

Scenes from the habits and customs of Jewish life are brought before us in our Saviour's discourses for our instruction. We have a street-scene in an eastern city ;⁵ an instance of the administration of justice ;⁶ customary behaviour at meals ;⁷ marriage festivities ;⁸ employers and payment of wages ;⁹ the yearly care of graves ;¹⁰ the smallest things in the household, such as the old patch on the new garment and the bottles for keeping the wine ;¹¹ financial corruption amongst officials ;¹² the tyrannical spirit of the Gentile governors ;¹³ the Sybaritic and materialistic views of the wealthy classes in Israel ;¹⁴ pictures from agricultural and pastoral life ;¹⁵ and finally the magnificent ceremonial of the Temple.¹⁶

Fishing is a symbol of the work of an apostle.¹⁷ Sorting out the fish and dividing the cockle from the wheat represent the last judgment at the end of the world.¹⁸

¹ John iii. 14.

³ Luke xiii. 1-4.

⁵ Matth. vi. 2.

⁷ Luke xi. 37-39.

⁹ Matth. xx. 1, &c.

¹¹ Luke v. 36-38.

¹³ Matth. xx. 25.

¹⁵ John x. 1, &c.

¹⁷ Mark i. 16, 17.

² Matth. xxiv. 37 ; xi. 23.

⁴ Matth. xxiii. 29.

⁶ Matth. xviii. 25-30.

⁸ Matth. xxv. 1, &c.

¹⁰ Matth. xxiii. 27.

¹² Luke xvi. 1, &c.

¹⁴ Luke xii. 16-21 ; xvi. 19, &c.

¹⁶ John vii. 37.

¹⁸ Matth. xiii. 30, 40, 47-49.

The Pharisees are very vividly described with their conspicuous attire,¹ their faces bearing traces of their fasts.² Allusion is made to their prominent position in the Temple and street-corners when engaged in prayer,³ the trumpets sounded to draw attention to their almsgiving,⁴ and their impatient, jealous and angry spirit.⁵

A most beautiful example of accuracy in the description of individuals occurs in the parable of the Good Samaritan.⁶

Our Lord knew how to express the deepest mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, and the procession of the divine Persons in vivid, thoughtful language, and with marvellous profoundness.⁷

His use of parables contributed greatly to this vividness in our Saviour's method of teaching; and it will be interesting and instructive to study this subject rather more closely.⁸

A parable is either a mental picture or an incident taken from visible nature and human life for the purpose of explaining and illustrating some transcendental and spiritual teaching.

Why did our Saviour make use of parables?

Firstly, because to do so was in conformity with the oriental way of giving instruction, and was one of its peculiarities. If Christ wished to be regarded as a wise man and a doctor of the law, He had to show His ability to teach thus.

¹ Matth. xxiii. 5.

² Matth. vi. 16.

³ Matth. vi. 5.

⁴ Matth. vi. 2.

⁵ Luke xv. 25.

⁶ Luke x. 30, &c.

⁷ John v. 19, &c.; xiv. 13-15.

⁸ Luke xxi. 29; John x. 6; Matth. xiii. 36; Mark iv. 34.

Secondly, it had been expressly foretold of Him that He should speak in parables.¹ In alluding to the rejection of the tribe of Ephraim,² and to the falling away of the ten tribes from the family of David, the Psalmist announces the future falling away of Israel from the Son of David and the rejection of Him by the people, due primarily to their own fault ; although the fact that our Saviour veiled His doctrines under the form of parables contributed to it.³ Therefore their use formed part of the mysterious design of divine providence.

Thirdly, the method of conveying instruction by means of parables had many advantages both for the Teacher and His hearers. It was well adapted to the mental capacity of an audience consisting of people of different ranks and various degrees of education. Parables are simple and popular, appealing to the intellect and imagination, and particularly suited to the ignorant, without being less useful to the learned. In a similar way this method was adopted to the moral condition of our Lord's hearers, leading those who were good and who loved the truth to reflect upon and examine it, whilst providing a text for the wicked and incredulous, as our Saviour Himself said with the prophet, that "seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not." They received too much light to be able truthfully to excuse themselves, and too little not to have some pretext for so doing. So they despised it and remained in their sinful unbelief.

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 2 ; Matth. xiii. 35.

² Ps. lxxvii. 67.

³ Luke viii. 10 ; Mark iv. 11, &c. ; Matth. xiii. 13, &c.

⁴ Mark iv. 12 ; Matth. xiii. 11-15.

A parable is an excellent means of conveying sharp and disagreeable truths in an inoffensive manner. Our Lord often foretold the rejection of the Jewish people in parables ;¹ and this practice enabled Him to show a tender and delicate consideration for the Gentiles, many of whom listened to His teaching in Galilee. They might easily have been offended by a frank statement of His doctrines on faith and morals. Our Lord did not, however, always speak in parables, as we see in the Sermon on the Mount. He did so only when the mental or moral disposition of His hearers made it desirable.²

Thus parables were to the advantage of all, of those "within," and those "without."³

The method of teaching in parables was profitable to our divine Saviour Himself, as in this way His magnificent mind could reveal itself in all its depth, penetration and refinement, in all its grace and charm. Hence the frequent use of this mode of instruction in His discourses. In them we find parables from every day life and historical events ; parables of His own composition and others well known to His audience ;⁴ some long, others short, some fully developed, and others merely suggested ; so that they resemble a beautiful tapestry, in which the chief picture is set in and surrounded by charming little ornaments. In this way He won esteem and affection from ignorant and educated people alike. In fact any child can understand His parables, but the

¹ Luke xiv. 24 ; xix. 27 ; xx. 17-18 ; Matth. xxii. 7.

² Matth. xiii. 34 ; Mark iv. 33, 34.

³ Mark iv. 11.

⁴ Matth. xiii. 52.

intellect of the wisest man is not able to fathom all that they contain. They show us our Lord's mastery over beautiful language and poetry. "Jesus lives not only in truth and goodness, but in beauty, in that highest form of beauty that coincides with goodness and truth, in that poetry which is the expression of morality and knowledge."¹

So in His teaching He made use of everything :— the country and its inhabitants, their religion, customs and history. All served to express and convey His doctrines and higher truths. He addressed the mind through the senses; and this is indeed the right system, for in man the senses are the source and beginning of natural knowledge, and they are not without significance in the apprehension of supernatural truths. The natural and the supernatural alike are the work of the same Creator; and both are revelations of Himself and His mysteries, in such a way that the one interprets, expresses, suggests and completes the other. The spiritual and supernatural truth is led up to by the sensible and natural, by means of certain suggestions, types and traces; and thus the two orders of natural and supernatural creation form one common domain of truth. This vast and glorious kingdom of truth lay extended before our Saviour, whose great mind surveyed it, beholding at every moment all the various provinces of it. All the relations existing between them were exposed to His sight; and thus without hesitation He discovered in the natural order types corresponding to every supernatural mystery. Just as the hand of the skilful musician touches the

¹ Kralik, *Jesu Leben und Werk*, 344.

strings and sets in vibration the one corresponding to each note that he wishes to produce, so did our Lord's mind lightly touch the great instrument of truth, awakening an echo in all kindred departments of creation. Thus in plain and simple parables He revealed the counsels of God "from the foundation of the world" ¹ and "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." ²

They are not only instructions, but are also prophecies relating to the kingdom of God in the future of the Church. The nature and destiny of the Church are described in our Lord's parables, and, as it were, brought visibly before us. Her supernatural origin is revealed in the seed planted in the earth by a hand from above (parable of the sower);³ her growth from that seed, in conflict with internal and external difficulties (parables of the seed);⁴ her gradual extension in consequence of the apostles' preaching (parable of the candle);⁵ her indwelling strength (parable of the mustard-seed);⁶ her power to attract and transform mankind (parable of the leaven);⁷ her mode of development as a result of slow and gradual growth and prosperity under the influence of the Holy Ghost (parable of the cornfield);⁸ her wonderful treasures of grace (parable of the treasure in the field and of the pearl);⁹ and finally the end and unchanging purpose of the Church on earth (parable of the net).¹⁰

¹ Matth. xiii. 35.

³ Luke viii. 5.

⁵ Matth. v. 15.

⁷ Luke xiii. 21.

⁹ Matth. xiii. 44-45.

² Matth. xiii. 11.

⁴ Matth. xiii. 4-8, 24-30.

⁶ Luke xiii. 19.

⁸ Mark iv. 26, &c.

¹⁰ Matth. xiii. 30, 48.

Here indeed we have deep mysteries and prophecies. Who, at that time, could have grasped and understood them? And yet our Lord laid them before the people in a series of pictures derived from the landscape, scenes such as may still, at least partially, be witnessed beside the lake, when the fishermen draw their nets ashore, or where the weeds shoot up amidst the vigorous growth of the corn, which lets its heavy grains fall now on the stony soil of the hill-sides, now on the paths traversing the fields, to be trodden down by men and beasts. All has been fulfilled, first figuratively in the Founder of the Church Himself. "The leaven was brought into the mass of mankind by the agency of a woman, who received it from heaven. God's seed was excessively small and insignificant: at first a poor child lying in a manger; then, after thirty years spent in obscurity and humble labour, a man, who taught a few others a doctrine that can be written on ten pages. And all this took place, not in the great kingdoms of the east, but in the midst of a small and despised nation, far from the centres of civilisation—Rome and Greece."¹

Thus the parables were really prophecies, and it is in the Catholic Church alone that they are perfectly fulfilled.

3.

Spiritual eloquence, like every true eloquence, must proceed from the heart and go to the heart. The

¹ Words of Gratry, quoted by Abbé Verdunoy, *L'Évangile*, 138.

orator appeals to the intellect and imagination, in order to rouse the will. Our Saviour acted in the same way. A characteristic feature in His mode of teaching is its unction, by which we mean the beneficial effect of His words upon the will. They penetrate and sway it, offer it pleasing suggestions, gently lay hold upon it and incline it to what is good. All this occurs when a speaker not only shows great powers of mind, and addresses himself to the mind, but also reveals his heart and feelings, and awakens the sympathy of his hearers. Our Saviour always assumed that the hearts of those who heard Him were generous, good and wise. He showed them the goodness of His own heart and allowed it to speak to them. His words are not flashes of lightning, apt to cause alarm; but they are peaceful, quiet rays of the sun, giving light to the eye and soothing warmth to the heart. They always influence the will, though in very various ways. Chiefly they do so by supplying the will with motives for action. Our Lord hardly ever made a demand of anyone without supplying him with reasons for complying with it. He derived these reasons from all sorts of things, sometimes from the natural order,¹ sometimes from the supernatural;² now with reference to God,³ now to our neighbour,⁴ and now to the person addressed.⁵

In one place He appeals to our reason, in another to our generosity or desire of happiness. Setting aside the trivial criticisms, the artificiality and forced inter-

¹ Luke xiv. 8-11.

³ Matth. v. 45, 48.

⁵ Matth. vi. 4.

² John xiii. 34.

⁴ Matth. xviii. 15.

pretations of the law common among the Pharisees, He lays hold on what is really great—on the spirit of the law—and always lays stress in His religious teaching on what is in conformity with reason and nature, on what is beautiful, noble and full of comfort; and then He leaves it to us to choose. He always teaches what really benefits, encourages, helps and raises us. He insists always upon the fact that Heaven, our great aim, is to be our reward, and He constantly speaks of the glorious and everlasting kingdom awaiting us in return for all our good actions, even the most trifling.¹

He bids us do this and that, and promises that we shall be blessed.²

It is only under compulsion that He has recourse to threats, and shows Himself implacable only towards dishonesty and intolerance.³

Some of His discourses are models of rhetorical skill in their contents, compass and gradation. Such are, for instance, the warning against excessive anxiety to supply daily needs;⁴ the call upon His followers to bear the cross and persecution for His sake;⁵ and especially the speech against giving scandal.⁶

There are many passages containing deep pathos, in spite of the fact that they are very short. On one occasion our Saviour was in a house, surrounded by His disciples and others whom He was instructing, when His own relatives tried to force an entrance, wishing to

¹ Matth. x. 42.

³ Matth. xxiii.

⁵ Luke ix. 23-27; xii. 4-12.

² Matth. v. 3, &c.; John xiii. 17.

⁴ Luke xii. 21-31.

⁶ Matth. xviii. 6-14.

take Him home with them; for they believed Him to be overwrought. When told for the second time that His Mother and brethren were standing outside, He cried: "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" Then, stretching out His arms, and looking at the apostles and the others about Him, He added: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister and mother."¹

How impressive are the concluding words of the great vision in which our Lord disclosed the mysteries of divine predestination, and revealed Himself as the central point and end of this predestination: "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light."²

Who could ever feel and comprehend the full depth and tenderness of these words?

No less impressive is the close of that memorable day at Capharnaum, when the people, shortly before so enthusiastic at the announcement of the great mystery of love, turned away from Him in unbelief; and the pain of dissension made itself felt even among the disciples. Full of emotion our Lord turned to the apostles, still standing round Him, and asked them: "Will you also go away?"³

How awe-inspiring is His ironical mention of Jerusalem, uttered when the Pharisees were trying by

¹ Matth. xii. 46; Mark iii. 31.

² Matth. xi. 28, &c.

³ John vi. 68.

stratagem to induce Him to leave Peræa and come to Judæa, where He would be more in their power : " It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." And how terrible is the repeated denunciation of the Deicide city : " Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not." ¹

How deeply significant are the few words addressed to the traitor : " Friend, dost thou betray the son of man with a kiss?" ²

Our Lord's farewell discourse is however the chief instance of touching and impressive pathos. Three emotions quite in keeping with the circumstances characterize this masterpiece of our Saviour's teaching and revelation. The first is love and warmth of heart. Love accompanied every one of His words and works ; but here it seemed to assert itself imperatively. It revealed itself openly, and pouring forth unhindered and in endless abundance, filled the hearts of the apostles, and through them the hearts of the faithful and of all mankind, striving to unite all in itself, and bind all together in one great union of love with the Father in the Holy Ghost. In the broken sentences of our Lord's prayer, offered in His capacity as high priest, we seem almost to feel the heart beat with the pulsation of love. This discourse may be called the death song of human and divine love. ³

¹ Luke xiii. 33, 34 ; xix. 42.

² Matth. xxvi. 47 ; Luke xxii. 48.

³ John xvii. 20, &c.

The second emotion is sorrow, pain at the approaching separation, at the suffering and death that lay before Him ; grief too at the retribution due to it, and at the endless troubles and persecutions that his followers in every age would have to undergo. Overpowered by these feelings, He could with difficulty control Himself, and words seemed to fail Him;¹ but in the end His courage and desire to comfort others prevailed over this weakness. In this we find the third feature of his discourse. Comfort is so abundant and so real that sorrow changes into joy ; and the words of consolation conclude with a triumphant cry of victory,² so that the apostles, encouraged and uplifted by the truth and assurance of this comfort, were full of confidence when they quitted the well lighted room where they had eaten the Paschal Supper and set out on the dark road to Gethsemane.³ Thus the farewell discourse is not only the climax of the revelation of His spirit and His truth, but also the masterpiece of the eloquence of His Heart—a true human heart, affected, like our own, by joy, fear, sympathy, sorrow, melancholy, courage, tender love and friendship, and all the varying emotions and feelings common to mankind.

There were indeed other means by which our Saviour influenced the wills of His hearers. These were particularly the dignity and decision of His character and His absolute consistency—consistency of mind, for He was the truth itself, never contradicting itself, never needing to retract an assertion, never

¹ John xiii. 33 ; xv. 19, &c. ; xvi. 16, &c.

² John xiv. 30 ; xvi. 33.

³ John xviii. 1.

showing any uncertainty or hesitation, never uttering a mere supposition, or a remark not quite to the point; consistency also of action, for His life was in the most perfect agreement with His teaching, and displayed the truest sanctity, without flaw and beyond all criticism. There was moreover the authority with which He taught and bore testimony to Himself. The authority that He claimed was not that of a wise man and a doctor of the law, but that of a law-giver, of one with unlimited rights in matters of law and religion. He never appealed to the authority of other teachers and never quoted their opinions, as was the custom of the Jewish doctors of the law. He was His own authority; hence He often says: "But I say to you"; He speaks of Himself as fulfilling the old law,¹ and as Lord of the law.² He does not only state the law, He legislates.

Finally He influenced the wills of men by His power to work miracles in all departments of life; and He made use of this, with the express intention of thereby confirming His doctrine, often surprising, attracting and overcoming men by displaying His ability to read their hearts.³

He indeed possessed means of instruction and of conviction such as no one else could employ. He was the one true and supreme teacher,⁴ at once God and man.

Such a teacher could not fail to be successful. His preaching aroused attention throughout the whole

¹ Matth. v. 17-28.

² Matth. xii. 8.

³ John i. 47, 48; Matth. xxii. 18; Luke v. 22; vii. 40; xi. 17, 39.

⁴ Matth. xxiii. 10.

country. As soon as He entered upon His public life, He was greeted by His followers as "Master."¹ The people constantly addressed Him thus;² and even the Pharisees and Scribes recognised Him as a teacher of the law, although He had been trained in none of their schools, and had no official authorization for His teaching.³

The people esteemed and praised Him very highly,⁴ for they felt that He spoke with a force unlike that of the teachers to whom they were accustomed.⁵

No house and no synagogue could contain the ever increasing crowd of those anxious to hear Him.⁶

They left house and home, travelled long distances and followed Him into the wilderness.⁷ They trod upon and jostled one another as they pressed about Him,⁸ and forgot when in His presence to provide themselves with food and drink.⁹

In His neighbourhood all felt at home, cheerful, comforted and happy. His enemies were unable to stop the movement.¹⁰ Their ridicule died away before the power of His eloquence; and they were compelled to bear testimony to the beauty, charm, truth and power of His words.¹¹ Finally, routed and annihilated on all points, they gave up trying to argue with Him,¹² and had recourse to other modes of attack,

¹ John i. 38, 49.

² Luke ix. 38.

³ John iii. 2; viii. 4; Matth. xii. 38; Luke xx. 21, 28, 39.

⁴ Luke iv. 15.

⁵ Mark i. 22, 27; Matth. vii. 28, 29; Luke iv. 32.

⁶ Mark ii. 1, &c.

⁷ Mark i. 45; vi. 33.

⁸ Luke xii. 1.

⁹ Mark viii. 2.

¹⁰ John xi. 48; xii. 19.

¹¹ Luke iv. 22; John vii. 47.

¹² Luke xix. 48; xx. 40; Matth. xxii. 46.

believing that His words would cease to trouble them only when He was in His grave.

There must have been many wonderful scenes in the life of our Lord. We may picture Him on the majestic heights of the "Horns of Hittin," where He is believed to have uttered the Sermon on the Mount. It is a hill with two peaks, the hollow between them forming a kind of amphitheatre, with a delightful view over very varied scenery:—the lake with its clear water and the more distant districts of Iturea, Decapolis and Peræa on one side, and, on the other, the green plain of Zabulon shut in by the stately mountain ranges of Lebanon and Antilebanon. Before Him were picturesque groups of people in many coloured garments, some from Idumæa and Judæa, others from the country east of the Jordan, some even from Tyre and Sidon; and our Lord, clothed in the dignity of prophet and law-giver, and displaying the gentle courtesy of the eternal Wisdom in the form of man, made known the law of the New Covenant.¹

Again we may think of Him in a little boat on the calm, softly rippling lake, in the beautiful bay of Bethsaida or at Capharnaum, expounding the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven by referring to the wonders and beauties of nature all around; the people standing in long rows or in little groups on the hillsides, crowded along the shore of the lake; whilst perhaps the quivering rays of the setting sun lighted up the luxuriant verdure of the fields near the water, and the steep rocks on the eastern side, with their wild ravines, glowed red and blue and purple in

¹ Luke vi. 17, &c.; Matth. iv. 25; v. 1, &c.

the evening light, the snowy peak of Hermon in the dim distance towering above the wondrous landscape.

These were scenes which in beauty, dignity and significance far surpassed those enacted when the law was given on Sinai, and the people were pledged on Hebal to its observance:—scenes of which our Lord Himself said: “Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For Amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them:”¹—scenes which all nations of the world should have been eager to witness. When God Himself appears in order to instruct mankind, it is an event of infinite significance; and when God speaks in beautiful, human language, surely everyone should be ready to hear and accept His teaching.

And yet, incredible as it may seem, the people in general neither understood nor believed His doctrine. The heavenly seed, rich with the promise of fruit, was sown; but it found no fertile soil in the Promised Land, and so was carried away by the Holy Ghost and the apostles scattered it among the Gentiles. It was there that Christ’s teaching had its full effect and accomplished the most glorious transformation. It overcame paganism and created the Christian world, in which the faith, science, art, laws and customs all became permeated with Christianity. The seed sown by our Saviour in His teaching developed

¹ Matth. xiii. 16, 17 : Luke x. 23, 24.

amongst us, producing great, glorious and blessed results. His preaching still continues in our midst, converting souls, giving wisdom to little ones, enlightening the eyes and gladdening the hearts of millions by its beauty and consolation.¹

How is it possible to consider the beauty of this teaching, and to delight in the comfort that it affords, without remembering the wise heart whence it proceeded ; without blessing the lips that made it known with so much grace, power and unction ; without being filled with loving admiration for the great and glorious mind that reveals itself so wonderfully and magnificently in it ?

¹ Ps. xviii. 8, &c.

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